

Promised Land

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Promised Land

by [cosmonaughtt \(orphan_account\)](#)

Summary

Ranboo remembers the days when he would kneel at his bed to pray before the nuns turned out the lights and begged God that he'd be the next kid to go.

He was a good kid; he was helpful, he was kind, he was humble, he was everything the nuns raised him to be.

But nobody ever wanted him.

Not even his own parents.

(alternatively; ranboo's the oldest kid at a catholic orphanage. strange run-ins with mysterious people and strange abilities make him question everything he's ever known about the world and of himself. but maybe he'll get a new family out of it.)

Notes

Edit 2/27/24

I am orphaning this fic. Thank you all, always, for the support and love this fic (and the two associated one-shots) have been given, but I can no longer stand behind the inspiration from CCs like Wilbur and Dream who have turned out to be absolute pieces of shit anymore. This fic will still be accessible on AO3 for access, but I no longer wish to be associated with it anymore.

Love you all,

Cosmo N.

Edit 2/23/24:

Here we go again.

(head in hands)

I'm just going to make a blanket statement here (for some things that should be obvious). If any CCs on the DreamSMP/otherwise associated that appear in this fic have allegations come

out against them that deal with serious topics (i.e. abuse, SA, grooming, etc.), I don't condone or want to associate with them. It's disappointing as a former fan to see all of these things come out about creator I and many others once looked up to, but I don't wish for the people just stumbling upon this fic for the first time in the more than two years since this has been published to think I still stand by any accused creator.

TLDR; For the re-readers (or new readers, hi); I don't wish to associate with the DreamSMP anymore. I am keeping this up as a time capsule to reflect on my past as a writer, and because I'm proud of the work I've done on it. The characters will still be named after the characters in this fic, and that is it.

(Also I am working on something behind the scenes, stay tuned for that update...)

Edit 10/15/22

Over the past few weeks I've become less enthralled with how Dream has been handling "drama" (I hate using that term sorry) and allegations of grooming. I'm just gonna leave this note here to re-readers and future readers of Promised Land that I don't condone or stand by anything Dream says or does.

He still will remain a part of this story for now. The time may come where I dig through Promised Land and edit him out, but not now. I don't want to remove any mention of his name from the tags of this fic because that would be a bit rude to new readers going into it without realizing Dream is in it lmao

Anyway I hope y'all understand this ramble here.

TLDR: I don't want to associate this fic with Dream anymore, though he'll remain a character in it for now. I do not agree with or condone any of his action, past or future.

Here's A List Of All Of My Traumas, By Me

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

He's afraid of the rain.

He doesn't remember *why* he's afraid of the rain-- which is, for Ranboo, an unfortunately common thing. He doesn't remember why he's afraid of the rain, why it *feels like* it stings his skin as he runs quickly in the pouring rain to the nearest shelter, to wait out the rain. He doesn't remember why he stares out at it unblinking, his mind going numb and feeling like the static electricity that comes off the old TV in the basement of the orphanage that they used to watch old VHS movies on it when the Sisters are asleep.

But Ranboo is afraid of the rain, even though he can't help but watch it trail down his bedroom window as the dull light of his desk lamp illuminates the room just enough for him to read.

It's not an interesting book. The Sisters keep an eye on everything that they have, always, constantly-- most of Ranboo's clothes are tailored hand-me-downs from men that the Sisters know in their life, because once puberty hit Ranboo's limbs went through a taffy pulling machine and stretched out longer than he had expected, and he stood at a good, awkward, awful 6'6" tall.

But it's not an interesting book. He would have much preferred to check out *The Golden Compass* or *Howl's Moving Castle*, but those were books he would bury his nose in and read parts of in the library during his weekend trip, remembering the page numbers he left off on when the nuns decided it was time to round up all the children and get them back to the orphanage; instead, it's a book that the nuns had suggested to him, about the life of a saint that Ranboo didn't care much about at all.

He's old enough to be confirmed in the church now, and even though he knows the nuns aren't going to *force him* to go through it, they push him towards it with gentle nudges, giving him suggestions of books of saints that they think will entice him enough to go through with it.

But Ranboo doesn't... He doesn't know.

He's the oldest kid at the orphanage; everyone else is five or six or, at most, eight, other than him, no one has ever wanted to adopt *him*. He's the awkward helper with the younger kids, he's known how to change a diaper since he was eleven, he's helped with the Sisters' church lessons with the younger kids since he was twelve, most adults who come to the orphanage think that Ranboo is just a volunteer, not a child looking to find a home himself.

He's been at the orphanage since he was four and left outside of it during a rainstorm. Maybe that's where his fear of rain comes from-- maybe his parents abandoned him here. Wouldn't that be another cruel addition to his life?

Ranboo tries to focus on the book in front of him, but it's written so blandly. The Sisters think he is pious just like them, don't they? He knows all the prayers by heart, not because he is devoted to the religion but because it's the only thing he's been raised with.

Is it bad to question your faith?

Ranboo has been having a lot of those thoughts lately.

Is it bad to question everything you've ever known?

He flicks off the desk lamp and sits in the darkness for a moment. His fingers interlace in the same way that he's been taught to pray, but he just rests them in his lap as he leans back in the old desk chair and looks up at the ceiling.

His room is quiet. He hears a few quick loud footsteps down the hall; a few boys, roughhousing at night. He's old enough to get his own room, which is nice because he doesn't have to share with anyone, but it feels lonely to not have others sleeping in a bed not too far from his.

The younger kids are full of energy tonight. Someone was adopted the day before; usually, adoptions come in waves, and they're all hoping and praying to the Lord that they'll be next.

Ranboo remembers the days when he would kneel at his bed to pray before the nuns turned out the lights and begged God that he'd be the next kid to go.

He was a good kid; he was helpful, he was kind, he was humble, he was everything the nuns raised him to be.

But nobody ever wanted him.

Not even his own parents.

A curt knock on the door interrupts his thoughts, and Sister Anne pokes her head in. She's the youngest of the nuns, but still, pretty old. Wrinkles circle her face gracefully.

She opens the door and sees him sitting at his desk in the dark which, is, admittedly, a little odd. "Ah, sorry-- were you in the middle of prayer?"

Ranboo forces a smile, forces a nervous laugh. "No, just-- just ended. You're okay."

Sister Anne nods. She leans against the doorframe, opening the old wooden door a little more to fit in. She's one of the sisters who respects Ranboo's space, and would probably let him check out a copy of *1984* or anything by Edgar Allan Poe if he wanted to. Her lack of seniority prevented her from doing such, unfortunately.

"Right, well. Just got the little ones to bed, and wanted to say goodnight." She has some sort of accent. Ranboo has asked multiple times, but his poor memory-- his poor, absolutely awful memory, paired with everything else he has-- prevents him from remembering where she's told him she's from multiple times. "Sleep well, Ranboo."

"You too, Sister." He forces the smile out again, and Sister Anne nods, shutting the door behind her.

The echoing sound of a lock clicking into place sinks his heart.

He doesn't want to flick his light back on and continue reading the book and wondering what Sister Marie wanted him to figure out from it when she recommended it to him; he didn't want to dig out his journal from under his pillow because today wasn't that eventful, today nothing happened, nothing was worth remembering from the day.

(These are the days he remembers too well, he finds-- days where nothing seems to happen. Days that tend to loop. Maybe the routine helps him remember. He doesn't know.)

The echoing of the locked door still rings out in mind, and he stands up and walks over to his bed, before flopping down onto it and wincing at the sound the old springs in the mattress make.

He looks back up at the ceiling.

He's going to be stuck in this orphanage until he ages out, isn't he?

The next morning, the storm passed. At some point in the middle of the night, according to the little boys in the room next to him, the power went out. They only noticed it because their alarm clock's time had gotten frozen at 3:00 A.M. on the dot.

For some reason they found it funny. Ranboo doesn't understand kids that well.

The kitchen is as chaotic as it ever is; even though a good ten-or-so odd kids live in the old converted church orphanage, the only people who work on the lands are the Sisters, an absent social worker, and a gardener. Everything is taken care of by the four nuns, including breakfast.

Which, this morning, is pancakes.

"Ranboo, can you get the formula out from the fridge for me?" Sister Anne greets him with a smile, and a baby on her hip. He nods, and awkwardly shuffles around two girls who are debating over whether three or four pancakes make the best stack of pancakes.

He's able to reach up and hit the top shelves quite easily, with the way puberty hit him like a truck. The orphanage doesn't tend to have babies that stay long, but they usually have at least one or two under the care of the nursery.

He grabs one of the bottles, too, and pours it in before tightening the cap to give to Sister Anne. She hands it to the baby on her hips, one with curly hair named Helena.

Ranboo remembers when she was dropped off-- it was a cliche, left-on-the-doorstep-in-a-basket story, the only thing to her name was a yellow blanket and the letters "HEL", so the nuns called her Helena.

"Thank you so much, Ranboo. You're such a good kid." Sister Anne smiles at him. It helps that the nuns all wear the same habit, easy to identify them in public. They're all different heights, too, drastically-- Sister Anne is the shortest. She has the accent Ranboo can never place, and the wrinkles that are more graceful and pleasant than the other nuns.

"T-Thank you, Sister." He flusters under the compliment.

It's Sister Joan that enters the kitchen next. Sister Anne is taking care of baby Helena and a toddler, and Sister Marie is trying to organize a line for the kids to get breakfast. Ranboo simply grabs a few pancakes on his own, weaving in front of the other kids.

The other kids don't seem to complain much, because he *is* the oldest. And he helps them with the coursework that sister Joan assigns, and *was* the one they would go to if they woke up with a nightmare.

Was the one, until the nuns had to start locking him in his room.

"Good morning, children." Sister Joan's presence alone quiets all the kids except the baby and the toddler, who coo under Sister Anne's attention. "It's Saturday, which means it's cleaning day."

The kids groan. Ranboo doesn't mind cleaning that much. Sister Joan pulls out her list.

"David, Christian-- you're helping the gardener today." The two boys who had been talking about the power outage give each other high-fives. "Make sure to remember your *boots*, it's quite muddy out from the night before. Sarah, Elizabeth, Allison, you're helping Sister Anne in the nursery today..."

Sister Joan continues to dish out chores for the day. Deep-cleaning the kitchen, the bathrooms, and the entrance. Some organization to the classroom, the single room that is also the chapel that is really only decorated with more educational books, a few desks that can easily be pulled around the room, and a chalkboard on wheels.

"And Ranboo." Sister Joan's glance falls upon him. She's easy to recognize, with her fairer complexion and thick glasses and mole on her chin. "Today, you're going to be coming with me to the store."

A few kids laugh, but Ranboo lets out a sigh of relief. Going shopping with the sisters was probably the easiest chore. He would usually get cleaning the classroom, but maybe God had mercy on him and decided that he would be allowed to go somewhere that wasn't the town's local library or the park with the other kids, for once.

The idea of interacting with other people in a place like the grocery store is-- it's scary, to Ranboo. But it's a welcome change.

He's glad he took a shower the night before, because Sister Joan dismisses everyone to their chores immediately after the dishes are rinsed and put in the old dishwasher to clean, and leaves the room, expecting Ranboo to follow her.

Which he does. He knows what it's like to be on the bad side of the nuns, especially Sister Joan, so he doesn't waste any time following after her.

The car ride to the grocery store is quiet, other than the hymns playing through the old cassette player. The nuns never buy anything for themselves; most of what they own personally are gifts from other people; vehicles included.

Ranboo doesn't know cars, but he at least knows that the car is some sort of mini-van.

Once they get to the store, Sister Joan hands him the re-usable bags to carry and pulls out a notepad with a list of groceries on it. The weekly grocery trip takes the nuns up to hours to complete; especially if any of the younger kids go with them. Half of the trip is then taken up by wrangling kids.

Maybe Sister Joan just needed a break and that's why she asked Ranboo to come.

"Alright, Ranboo." Sister Joan's voice is a little less piercing when there aren't nine other kids and two babies to speak over, but it's still powerful. "There are a lot of things on the list to get, but most of them I can get myself."

Oh.

"Then, um, why--"

--Why did I ask you to come?" Sister Joan interrupts as they enter the building. The carts are right next to the entrance, and Sister Joan makes sure to grab one of the bigger ones "You're almost an adult. You're better to deal with than the younger ones. Plus, if you wander off, I don't have to go hunting for you for two hours and find you burying another in the frozen meat section."

Ranboo remembers that. David and Christian had to scrub the floor for two weeks after that and had extensively long talks with Father Patrick on that Sunday.

"Aren't you--"

"Worried about your face blindness?" She's quick to answer questions, as she usually is. "No. You've never had a problem identifying any of us. Not to mention, we're always in our habits, so you just need to look for a nun and you'll find me. The odds of running into another nun on a Saturday morning at this grocery store are slim to none."

"Ah. Okay." They've already walked into the store, and Sister Joan directs the cart over to the produce section. She picks up a watermelon curiously.

"Go find something to buy for yourself." Sister Joan says, but not in a nice way. More of a *get-out-of-my-way-please* kind of way. "Not too expensive, not too much sugar."

"Y-yes ma'am!"

And just like that, Ranboo wanders away from his caregiver in a grocery store that he doesn't know the layout in, and where he will most likely get lost in and forget his way out, with strangers around him that have unrecognizable faces.

The store is playing an unrecognizable tune, but it's bright and colorful and Ranboo nods along with it, not hearing much of the words. He wanders through the produce section, looking at all the fruit they have available.

Sister Joan is most definitely expecting him to find something that he can either eat quickly on the ride back, or store safely out of the reach of the other children, and fruit isn't that easy to store, so he wanders into the other aisles.

It's quiet for a Saturday morning. Summer is just around the corner-- not that it matters much for the orphanage, since lessons are mostly year-round and only stop during Lent and Advent-- and bright, beach-themed decorations decorate the store alongside the locally grown food on display.

Everything is bright and colorful, and Ranboo can't help but be distracted by the flowers on display at one corner in the store. It's nothing like what he's seen Gardener Lou do with the plants and herbs and vegetables in the yard, but the flowers smell pretty and look pretty.

Even though it's not food, maybe I could get a few to decorate my room? He knows the odds of him being adopted in the next few days are absolutely zero, and a little more life into the dusty office-turned-bedroom would make at least a week or two more liveable, until the flowers withered. When they die, he can press them in the pages of his journal.

That would be nice--

"Anything catch your eye?" A voice catches him off-guard, and he jumps. He turns around, and sees a woman behind him. Her hair stands out the most, blonde but half-dyed pink.

"Ah, no, I was just-- looking."

"You're free to look, too." She smiles. The nametag on her apron says *Niki*.

He's never seen anyone with pink hair before. His own hair is dark, with a few strands turning gray, adding on top of the awful mess that God has placed on his shoulders.

"The Dahlias and Zinnias are really in bloom now, and the colors are great this time of year. We're also getting in a few sunflowers later next week, if you're looking for anything bigger." She explains, pushing some of the dyed-pink hair out of her way.

"Oh, no I can't get anything that big." Sunflowers would be too big for his room, even though they are a nice flower.

"Are you thinking of a special someone?" She gives him a look that flusters him immediately.

"Ah, no-- no, I don't. Um. Have anybody. Like that. It'd be for my room, if anything." He tries to resist the urge to bury his face in his hands.

"I'm just teasing." She laughs. "Well, if you're looking for something for your room, we have some Amaryllis and Lillies. The store next door has more house plants, if that's what you're looking for." She adds, ducking behind the counter that was hidden behind all the display and grabbing a few flowers Ranboo couldn't recognize.

"Really? Uh, thank you." *Maybe if I ask nicely, Sister Joan will let me get one instead of some food.*

"It's no problem!" She gives him a thumbs-up. "If you need any advice for flowers or plants, just let me know."

"Thank you, Niki." Niki blinks for a moment at Ranboo's response, before her fingers brush against the nametag on her apron and she seems to remember.

"Anyway, you can get back to browsing. Have a nice day!" She waves, before going to collect a few other flowers to put in a bouquet as Ranboo glances at some of the other flowers and plants on display.

He grabs the small pot that's labeled Amaryllis. Hopefully Sister Joan will say yes to it, but he decides it might be better to browse some of the aisles to find her or find an alternative thing to get.

The breakfast aisle has the only other people Ranboo has encountered the whole grocery trip. It seems to be another family-- a dad, by the looks of it, and two sons. One has brown curly hair tucked neatly into a beanie, and the other one is blond and wears a bright red shirt. The father wears mostly green, and has hair long enough to be pulled back in a low pony-tail.

Ranboo can't help but feel two things upon seeing them. One, a twinge of jealousy, a *family*, a parent who loves you and wouldn't leave you on the steps of an orphanage, that he quickly buries down because he reminds himself to be thankful for the roof over his head and the sisters that take care of him.

The other is something he can't place. Admiration? One of his own hands goes up to his hair. He's never had his hair any longer or cut any different than what he's had his whole life, but the long hair on the dad looked... It looked *cool*. He wished the nuns would let him grow his hair out, but when it gets too shaggy it's to the backyard with the other boys for a haircut with the gardener Lou.

He isn't too bad with scissors, at least. Maybe, in another time, Lou would be a hairdresser.

Ranboo nervously looks at the cereal and pretends to be more interested in it as if he was caught staring. Which. He wasn't caught staring. But it's rude to stare, so he turns to brightly-colored cartoons on the boxes of cereal too sugary to buy.

"*Phil* , Wilbur's making fun of me again!"

"What'd he do?"

"All I did was get something off the shelf that he couldn't reach, and he got upset at me for helping him!"

"I could've fucking reached it--"

Oh. Ranboo flinches at the curse. Right. Some people just. Talk like that. He looks even more intensely at the box of cereal with a cartoon rabbit on it. He wonders what it tastes like.

"You were standing on the bottom of the shelf! You could've brought the whole damn thing down with you!"

"I am very careful and strong and adept and that wouldn't have happened!" The younger boy says. Ranboo doesn't need to look (or recognize a face to begin with) to know the looks the younger boy was getting was incredulous. "See, look, I'll do it right now!"

"Tommy, no--" The pleas from his father fell on deaf ears, and Ranboo noticed out of the corner of his eye as the boy grabbed onto the edge of the shelves and scaled it up to grab something on the top shelf.

"You're impossible."

"But I didn't knock anything down, did I?"

"Well, you haven't come down yet." The dad-- Phil, was it?-- looked around in the aisle, and his eyes fell upon Ranboo.

Oh, *now* he got caught watching. His face flushed immediately, and he nods awkwardly to the family before turning on his heel and walking away.

That entire situation could've been dealt with better; a mean voice in the back of his head croons at him. He ignores it, and goes into the next aisle, holding the plant close to his chest.

"What the fuck was up with that kid?" Ranboo can hear the conversation still, on the other side. It makes sense, since the shelves weren't too high (he could easily reach the top shelf, but he was also freakishly tall, which didn't help) and were probably not that thick.

"I dunno, but you really scared him, Phil."

"I didn't *mean* to." A sigh. "Didn't even send anything his way... Alright, Tommy, come on down. You're in the clear."

In the clear? Send my way? Ranboo wonders. He doesn't hear a crash or anything on the other side, which means the blond boy-- Tommy-- must get down safely. But he doesn't hear any shuffling on the shelf, either.

Which is weird.

He doesn't focus on it too long, because Sister Joan comes into the aisle from another direction and notices him immediately. The cart is really full. She pushes it forward to meet up with him, and stops when she notices the potted plant he's holding.

"Is that what you want to get, Ranboo?" She asks.

"I-If that's okay with you."

There's something about the emotion Sister Joan gives off. He can't tell what it is. It's a positive emotion-- a spark, perhaps? "Yes, it is. I'm sure Lou has a small mister or watering can around that you can borrow for it. Nice to buy something other than knockoff candy, for once."

That was good.

Chapter End Notes

me before: i will Never write fanfic about real people, that's WEIRD
me in 2021: alright here we go

why is it that the first thing i can write after intense writer's block is fanfiction about BLOCK PEOPLE im gonna scream

anyway. i got into minecraft over winter break and i haven't looked back, here's a contribution to the fandom??

all these characters r based on characters they play in the stream not the actual people, btw.

i only watch ranboo streams and read fanfic so sorry if anyone is ooc.

no romance is planned but if any creators get uncomfy with this i'll take it down!

kinda inspired by "oh, we can be heroes" but i'm adding my own religious trauma and making ranboo the main character AS HE DESERVES.

Are People Really This Weird, Or Am I The Odd One Out?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The amaryllis hasn't died yet. Ranboo doesn't know what to call it other than a miracle of God that he hasn't managed to kill it by accident, but it shows no sign of withering whatsoever.

It's been a month. David, Allison and Sarah had all been adopted by good families, but a small girl named Charlie was brought to the orphanage by their absent social worker from the state. He never stays too long when he brings kids, unless Sister Anne is around and he tries to flirt with her.

It never works. But it's amusing to watch, at least.

Summer has officially started. Even though classes don't *end*, the Sisters give them longer breaks after studying and learning. Gardener Lou finds the old plastic pool and fills it up with water on hot days, and the younger kids gleefully splash around in it and enjoy snacks of watermelon and strawberries and blueberries from the garden.

Ranboo doesn't join them. He spends most of his free time by himself.

It's hard to relate to the kids-- he's a *teenager-almost-adult*, the second-oldest is Christian, who is eight, but still has a cute baby face that could trick any family into thinking he's an angel when he's far from it.

Charlie is one of the kids he can relate to the most. She's smaller than the other girls, despite being the new oldest kid at nine years old, and her ginger hair is tied off in nice braids that the nuns do. She doesn't wear shoes, doesn't talk, and stays away from the other kids, her face buried in a book or something else to keep her occupied.

The nuns didn't say anything about Charlie when she was introduced to the kids. But Sister Anne did drop it a few times to Ranboo that *poor dear, lost all her family, no one else to go to*, and he can put the puzzle pieces together on his own.

Still, Ranboo is on lifeguard duty with the kids one bright sunny day, as the Sisters have to deal with another family coming to adopt, and Charlie sits with him under the patio umbrella with a coloring book.

She's scribbled out the faces of the family on one page with black crayon. The little girl in-between the family has orange colored hair.

...Yeah, he didn't want to unpack *all* of that, so he turned back to the small kiddie pool, keeping his eye out, making sure no one drowns while also keeping a few eyes down on his own book. It's about some dystopian world, but the nuns saw it was catholic and let him

borrow it from the library, so it's a little more entertaining than the saint books he's been getting pushed towards.

It's still awfully boring, compared to other books. He was on page seventy-two of *The Hunger Games* at the library, and his mind keeps wandering back to it. *What will happen to Katniss? What is up with the world they're in?*

"Ranboo!" Christian cries out, and his head shoots up at the sound of his name. Charlie flinches, too, but she doesn't move. "Elizabeth stole the water gun!"

"Whatever happened to *sharing is caring*, Christian?" Elizabeth bites back. The pool toys are old and probably have collected a little bit of mold, but that doesn't stop the kids from shooting each other with water. He's amazed that the nuns let the kids play with something like a water gun when other toys in the playroom are not related to weapons. "You've had it for like, ten minutes already, it's *my turn!*"

"You stole it!"

"No I didn't!" Elizabeth aims the water gun and shoots it at Christian's face. He screams.

Ranboo isn't getting paid enough to deal with the younger kids-- scratch that, he doesn't get paid at all. He buries the library book under a pile of towels to keep it from getting wet and walks over to the kiddie pool to deal with the unnecessary drama.

"Elizabeth." He says, though he can't focus on her other than the braids. All the nuns braid the girls hair, making it harder to keep them apart. "Wait. No, sorry, Isabel." He turns to the right Elizabeth. "Elizabeth. Did you take it from Christian's hands?"

Elizabeth nods. "But he's had it for like, ten minutes! It's my turn!"

"Did you *ask* before you took it?"

"Yeah!"

"No you didn't!" Christian interrupts. "You just took it from my hands!"

"... Okay, I lied."

Ranboo pinches the bridge of his nose, sighing. "Christian, if she asked, would you have shared it?"

"Yeah, *duh.*" Christian replies. "We could've teamed up to take on Danny."

Danny, one of the younger boys, turns his head around at the sound of his name. He's got a snorkel and is just floating in the water like a dead man. Ranboo has had to call his name every now and then to make sure he *isn't* dead.

Elizabeth sighs, and hands the water gun back to Christian. "Sorry, I should've asked. Can I have a turn now?"

Christian's sour face brightens. "Yeah you can! You're a better aim, after all."

Petty drama between kids is amazing Ranboo, but it seems to be solved, so he turns around to walk back to the patio when water hits *his* back instead. He turns *back* around, and notices Christian and Elizabeth giggling to themselves with the water gun pointed directly at his back.

He wasn't even in any swimming clothes. The nuns said they would go out and buy him a pair of actual swim trunks when the next Saturday comes and they go out shopping, but it was a boring old Tuesday and he would have to be patient and wait for it. His t-shirt was soaked now, but he couldn't go in and change out of it so he would be stuck with a wet shirt for now on.

God, please, help me hold my tongue against these kids and give me patience to deal with them, he thinks. It's a prayer, but it's a thought-prayer.

Does it count?

He doesn't know.

It surprises him, one day, when Sister Anne stops him at the park. It's a weekly thing; after Mass on Sundays, the sisters take everyone to the playground not too far from the church to get out the pent-up energy from sitting so still and quiet for an hour. It's a nice way to spend the afternoon, and they make sure to let the kids change out of church clothes beforehand.

"Ranboo, there you are." Her voice is soothing. He's sitting on a bench, not too far from the playground, writing down what he remembers about Father Patrick's sermon. Something about-- how Saint Paul traveled across to spread the message of God-- something something, he's trying to remember.

"Am I in trouble?"

"You're never in trouble." Sister Anne laughs, as if it's an inside joke, but Ranboo doesn't get it. She clears her throat. "Actually, I wanted to tell you something. The other sisters and I have been talking, and... Well, we've been saving a little extra money up to get you this."

She reaches into her bag, which is usually where baby formula and snacks are stored, but she pulls something else out instead. It's a small box.

"You've been at the orphanage for years. We don't know when your birthday is, but it's the anniversary of the day you came here. Which is close enough, I hope."

He takes the small box from her. It's wrapped in leftover Christmas paper. The nuns don't let have kids have much, but a toy or a new book or a new bible or a new rosary for Christmas every year is a tradition, but presents outside of that? He's never heard of them doing anything like that.

"You didn't have to get me anything." He says, slowly unwrapping the paper and opening the box. His eyes widen. "You didn't have to get me *this*."

It's a cellphone. Not one of the newer brands that Ranboo sees advertised all over the television and in ads placed sporadically around town. But it's decent, and it's a touch screen, and it doesn't look *too* bad.

"Well, you're a teenager, and all of you kids have technology these days." Sister Anne laughs again, this one with a hand to cover her giddy smile. "It's not much, but you have all of our contacts and the number of the home line in it. Sister Marie even downloaded a few songs for you to listen to!" There's a pair of earbuds in the box as well.

"I don't... I don't know what to say. Thank you."

"You're a good kid, Ranboo." Sister Anne says. "You deserve so much better than what we can do. I can only pray to God that one day a family will come around for you."

Ranboo nods. He doesn't want to say, *thank you, but the prayers are worthless*. No one would want to adopt a teenager, who has memory problems and sleepwalking issues and can't recognize faces. No one would willingly adopt a child with problems-- the younger kids are bright and energetic, sans Charlie, who still hasn't spoken a word yet but no one has forced her to, but even then, she's young, and maybe with a little more prayer and healing and counseling, she could get better.

But Ranboo?

He doubts it.

"T-thank you." There are a few tears rolling down his cheeks. He can feel them sting his eyes, and Sister Anne wraps her arms around Ranboo and gives him a warm hug.

She's the closest that Ranboo has ever gotten to a motherly figure, out of all the other caregivers.

Their small moment is interrupted when she notices something. "Oh, Helena-- get those wood chips out of your mouth!" And she's off again.

Ranboo looks at the phone. It's set up for him already, and he opens it just like he's seen on the movies that were approved by the nuns to watch. A few christian pop albums are downloaded onto the phone, and he looks for the earphone jack-- there it is-- plugs them in, and plays one of the songs.

You are the peace in my troubled sea, oh oh

You are the peace in my troubled sea

He takes his phone everywhere with him. It's one of the first things other than the flower-- which *still* hasn't died-- that Ranboo has ever officially owned on his own, except a few stuffed animals as a child (that still line up at the end of his bed, and he will say he sleeps

with them sometimes because they're *comfortable*, he's adult enough to admit it) and a good collection of bibles and hand-me-down clothes.

But it's the first bit of technology he's ever owned on his own. The internet browser doesn't work well, and he doesn't want to think about touching any of the social media apps he hears about, and doesn't bother to download games or the kids would just ask to play them constantly, but he does listen to music a lot.

And go on walks.

It was a spur of the moment thing. Since he's older than everyone else, he gets his studies done quietly, in his room, only asking for help from the nuns occasionally. And when he gets his work done quickly, there isn't much to do.

So he asked if he could go on a walk. Not too far. But they said *yes*, and even gave him a ten-dollar bill in case he needed to get water or a snack. Not to go past the park by the church, but there were a few stores in-between that he could stop at.

The new freedom was strange. He didn't go further than the church, only looping around with *Joy* or *Burn Like A Star* playing in his earbuds, but it was good exercise. It got him moving.

It got him out of the orphanage, and that was *nice*.

He didn't run into people often, at least. Part of him was thankful, because not being able to recognize faces and having an awful memory made meeting people much less awkward.

But a small, tiny, part of him wanted to meet other people. To make friends. There were a few kids at church that talked to the *orphaned kids*, but no one really talked to them. The nuns tried to encourage Ranboo to attend the teen youth groups, but he never felt like he fit in there, and it was always loud. And energetic.

Things Ranboo didn't feel like he was at all.

But knowing people outside of the orphanage would be pretty nice, he had to admit.

On a warm Saturday afternoon, he asked to go on a walk when his chores were done, and they said yes again, since Ranboo was never a trouble-maker, and he just went to the park.

But fate, God, whatever it is that runs the universe, had a specific plan for him that day. Or so he thinks.

The park has a lot more people in it than it does Sunday afternoons after church. It's a Saturday afternoon, and families are intermingling and laughing and enjoying the nice summer day. Ranboo looks at the families and feels the same twinge of jealousy that he tries to ignore.

But it stays. He stands still, on the edge of the sidewalk leading up to the park, watching the families. Kids pushing siblings on swings. Mothers and fathers making sure that their kids have fun, talking amongst themselves, too. A few kids pile into one swing and a parent takes a photo.

A normal life. Is that what it's like? *To be happy, to have fun--*

It's a shame he doesn't notice the two kids on skateboards rolling towards them until one of them knocks into Ranboo and they both get knocked to the ground. The sidewalk stings his arms a bit, but his phone and everything is fine, at least.

"Oh shi-- I'm so sorry!" A hand reaches out to him. He's wearing a green t-shirt, and has chocolate brown hair, but he doesn't stand out too much. His accent is peculiar, though. "Are you alright?"

"Yeah I'm-- I'm fine!" Ranboo squeaks out. He hesitates, before taking the arm. The other boy helps him up, and he feels a little awkward at the height distance.

The other boy is laughing, not moving to help them in either way. He's blond, has a red t-shirt. Strangely familiar, but Ranboo can't place it. "Holy shit, Tubbo, how did you not see him? He's a giant!"

"I wasn't looking!"

"You're supposed to look forward on the board, idiot!" The other boy jumps off his skateboard and picks it up. "Hey, you look familiar."

"Do I?" Ranboo wishes he could recognize faces. Maybe then he'd remember where this other kid is from.

"You probably just know him from school, Tommy." The other boy, Tubbo, comments, picking up his own board. "What grade are you?"

"I'm. Um. Homeschooled." Ranboo says, nervously wrapping his fingers up in the cord of his earbuds, to distract him.

"Well then that doesn't help much, does it?" The blond boy-- Tommy-- gets closer to him. Squints his eyes. Scratches his chin.

"Um."

"Tommy, I reckon you're in his personal space." Tubbo says, grabbing the blond by the shoulder, pulling him back.

"That's it!" *What?* "Grocery store boy a few weeks ago!"

Ranboo blinks, and then it all comes back to him. Oh, the family in the grocery store-- was it the same Tommy? The blond hair seemed the same, and so did the voice.

"Yeah, you saw me scale up the shelves, huh? I looked pretty pog doing it, right?"

"Um. Yeah?" Alright, this was getting weirder. *Pog? What does that mean? Is it a bad word?*

Tubbo looked incredulous at the antics of his friend, turning to Ranboo. "What's your name? That's Tommy, and you can call me Tubbo."

“I’m, uh. Ranboo.”

“What kind of name is uh, Ranboo?” Tommy jests, and Tubbo elbows him in the side. “Ay, what the fuck?”

“Would it kill ya to be a little nicer, Tommy?”

Alright. Ranboo needed to go. His heart was picking up pace a bit and his hands were getting a little sweaty. *God, please, help.*

“Fine. *Sorry.*” Tommy said. “So, how come you’re homeschooled? Too smart for us regular folk?”

“Tommy, what kind of question is *that* ?!” Tubbo sighed, before looking up at Ranboo. “He has no filter, I’m sorry.”

“Yeah, I don’t have a filter cause I ate it when I was a baby!”

“You ate a coffee filter *once*, and you were *four*. ” Another voice joins the fray as another boy walks by. Curly hair, beanie... It’s Tommy’s brother. But Ranboo can’t remember his name. “He isn’t causing any problems, is he, Tubbo?”

“Just dumb questions.” Tubbo clarifies. “Oh, shoot, Ranboo-- your arm is bleeding.”

Huh? He glances at his arm, and where it hit the pavement, it is bleeding. Not a little bit, but not too much. It wasn’t painful, he didn’t even notice it, but it was a good sidewalk burn. He couldn’t remember the last time he had actually got hurt enough to bleed like this.

“Ouch, how’d that happen?” Tommy’s brother leaned down, looking closer at it.

“Tubbo hit him when he was skateboarding. It was actually pretty funny--” Tommy gets drowned out by the other two, at least.

Ranboo glanced at Tubbo. He’d been lucky to get away without a scratch, it seemed, he must’ve been the smaller boy’s cushion upon impact.

“I have a first-aid kit in my car. Want me to fix that up for you?” Tommy’s brother asks.

Ranboo wishes he said no, but he ends up following a stranger to their car anyway.

When he thought of a first aid kid that the older brother-- Wilbur, he learns on the way from Tommy-- would have, he imagined something small. Maybe some alcohol, a few bandaids, but they get to the car and Wilbur opens the trunk and there’s a giant chest of medical supplies.

Oh, Ranboo should definitely just turn around and start running. Who keeps a *chest* of medical supplies in their car?

Wilbur notices his hesitation immediately, as if he was reading his mind. Which would be impossible, but maybe Ranboo is just really easy to read. “It’s a little overkill, but you won’t believe the trouble Tommy and Tubbo get into.”

“I take total offense to that.” Tommy says. He and Tubbo are back a bit in the parking lot, trying to do a trick with the skateboard.

“He’s right,” Tubbo adds.

The alcohol stings just a little bit, but not too bad, and the cut isn’t that big on his arm. It only needs one bandaide, and given the choice between dinosaurs and plain, Ranboo obviously has to go with the colorful dinosaur band aid.

“Oh, um. Thank you.”

“It’s no issue.” Wilbur replied, as they stood back so that they could shut the trunk of the small car. It was a nice shade of yellow, not the sickly color of the boy’s bathroom but a warmer shade more like the sun right before sunset. “So, are you new to town then, Ranboo?”

“No. I’ve lived here my whole life.” Or, as long as he could remember. Well, he couldn’t remember much, without his journal. But the euphemism still applies.

“Oh. Haven’t seen you around much, then.” Wilbur adds.

“He’s homeschooled.” Tommy pronounces every single letter of *homeschooled* incorrectly, somehow, and Ranboo is amazed at the noise it makes.

“That explains it.”

The mention of homeschool reminds him to check the time. He should start heading back home soon, shouldn’t he? He pulls out his phone and glances at the time.

He’s still good on time. *Phew*. But he should probably start heading back soon, or the Sisters will start to worry, and he’ll never be allowed to go on a walk ever again.

They might…

No, they wouldn’t bring Sister Agnes into it.

“I gotta go. This was, um. Interesting. It was nice to meet you.”

“It was nice to meet you too, Ranboo!” Tubbo says, and pauses. “Hey, wait, what’s your phone number? We should hang out sometime, you seem really cool.”

Ranboo’s mind immediately blanks at the interaction. He knew what was happening, but he also didn’t know what was happening at the same time. Could he even give his phone number out to people he just met? Would the sisters get mad?

Tubbo and Tommy had already pulled their phones out, and Ranboo gave in and they exchanged numbers. It was weird-- very weird. He's never had friends before. And he just ran into these two boys his age who wanted to be his friends? Just like that?

If making friends was that easy, why hadn't he tried before? Why had previous times failed so bad?

The exchange made him nervous at first, but hopefully the nuns wouldn't mind. It would be good for him, right? To have friends? He's on his own at the orphanage, it would be good to know more people his own age.

He puts his earbuds back in when he's on the other side of the park, and hits shuffle on his music. *Create in Me* starts to play.

Thank you, God, he sends a quick prayer up.

He wonders how God gets the prayers. Do they go up in little envelopes, and does he pick through them individually? How would that work with time? Time doesn't work in heaven. Does he have interns to look through the prayers?

... Does God even get his prayers?

Chapter End Notes

hi y'all i got a twitter i wont post much there but it exists twitter.com/cosmonaughtt

listening to christian bops at 1am on valentines day was really a weird vibe idk if i'd do it again but it got me in the writing mood

Was gonna save this chapter for the future but I am enjoying this story right now and I thought hey let's just upload twice in a day ahaha ~

anyway I feel bad if anyone is ooc (again they're based on characters played in the DreamSMP not the actual ccs--) but "you ate a coffee filter when you were four" is such a great line i die every time I think about it dfsasaf

Anyway this chapter is a little dialogue-heavy but I'm still happy with how it turned out. See u whenever I finish the next chapter ;D

Oh, No, This Family is Actually Insane. How Did I Get Roped Up In This Again?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Whenever Sister Agnes has to get involved, Ranboo knows that only God's mercy can save them.

The fourth, the eldest, and the one in charge of everything, Sister Agnes doesn't get much involved with the actual caretaking as she does with legal paperwork and financing and actually taking care of the building, so when something happens with the children and Sister Agnes gets involved, everyone stands with their hands behind their backs and tries to not move.

Even at his age, Ranboo hides his hands. Even though he's only been in big enough trouble once to get Sister Agnes involved, he hides his hands.

He can still feel the sting from the ruler.

Ranboo keeps his eyes down and focused on his book as she enters. Even though it's still summer, the air conditioning keeps the building cold enough to need a sweater, and he wraps the ends of the sleeves around his hands.

He tries to not hear what's happening.

He tries to not hear the sick sound of wood meeting flesh.

He tries to not pay attention to anything except his own book.

Charlie is at his side. She's quiet as ever, but watches with wide eyes. He wants to tell her to look away, but it's her first time seeing Sister Agnes, and hopefully, she won't be on the other side of her wrath.

She flinches at the sound.

As soon as it happens it's over and Christian goes to his room. His hands are red. They look like they're bleeding a little bit.

Ranboo pretends to not see it.

If he tries to stand up, like-- like last time-- no.

No.

He doesn't *want* to remember it.

He doesn't want to remember it.

He's glad that he doesn't know what Sister Agnes' face looks like.

He closes his book and heads back to his bedroom. It's getting to be lights out soon, anyway. He's collected a few extra blankets from the playroom to help pad the floor a bit more after the previous night, where he ended up hitting his head pretty hard from sleepwalking.

The browser on his phone is no help with the problem. He doesn't think praying is helping much, no amount of confession and reconciliation has stopped the issue, but at least the nuns lock the door at night so he can't hurt himself outside of his room.

"I will be fine tonight," He tells himself, as he lays down and closes his eyes.

Ranboo wakes up on the floor again, in an awkward position. His head is on the ground, but half of his body is in his desk chair. He doesn't remember waking up, or getting out of bed. There's a little bruise on his head, but nothing else hurts.

He's just in an awkward position.

I must've just got up and sat at my desk, then, he thinks, pulling his legs off the chair slowly and pushing himself up. There was a decent amount of blanket around where he woke up, he used a few to pad the corners of his desk and side-table and dresser.

He must've brought the blanket on his desk down with him.

His flower, Amy the amaryllis still stands strong. She's the closest Ranboo will get to a pet in a while, so he named her and keeps her close to the sun, and she's even grown a bit, too. She's a lucky plant.

A jingling of keys at the door tells Ranboo that it's unlocked for him now, and that one of the sisters is up and about to let him out. The morning sun is barely peering through the curtains.

Ranboo wishes he could remember what he's dreaming of when he sleepwalks. It's confusing. He wraps the extra blanket around himself and lays back down on his bed and stares at the ceiling.

The internet has been no help. He's been checking the library, but they don't have any books on sleepwalking other than intense medical words that Ranboo can't understand.

Sister Marie says that it's some sin keeping him that way.

But he would remember if he sinned bad enough for God to punish him with sleepwalking, right?

Sister Anne says it's *stress*.

What is there to be stressed about? He's got a roof over his head. He's got food on the table. It's unconventional and he doesn't have a family, he's an orphan, and he has to deal with memory problems and prosopagnosia, but he's still got a decent amount of support from the sisters.

Sister Joan.... Well, she doesn't care. Sister Agnes is too busy with other stuff to bother with one orphan's problems. Which is fine. Much better that way, Ranboo decides.

He rolls over and checks his phone. For some reason, there's a message from Tubbo, despite the fact that it's six in the morning.

TUBBO: hey ranboo! tommy and his family r gonna go to the zoo this weekend, wanna come with us?

RANBOO: Have you slept yet?

TUBBO: it's summer there's no need to sleep when you can play minecraft

RANBOO : Minecraft? That's a video game, right?

TUBBO: you DON'T KNOW what MINECRAFT IS?

TUBBO: WHAT LIFE DO YOU LIVE???????

Ranboo briefly wonders if he should drop the O-word, but he doesn't. He doesn't want to be seen as weird by one of the first people to consider him an actual *friend*. He doesn't want to be left behind because he doesn't have a technical family.

That brings in the problem of the zoo. He's never been to the zoo before-- the only times that they have ever left the town have been to church events. A funeral. Nothing too exciting, but a zoo sounds exciting.

There are a few more messages asking him about video games and Minecraft, but he ignores them to send a response.

RANBOO: I'll ask about the zoo.

He rolls back over and stares at the ceiling again. It's a Monday, which means classwork, but if he finishes it early, he could go out on another walk. Maybe see Tommy and Tubbo again. They've met up once after their initial meeting.

It was strange. They went to an ice-cream place. It was one of the sweetest things that he's ever had-- a simple cone with rainbow sprinkles-- and he was craving it a bit more.

Sister Anne knows that Ranboo made friends. *Only* Sister Anne. He's not keeping it a secret from the other nuns, he just hasn't found a way to drop it in conversation naturally, but when he got back that day Sister Anne noticed the dinosaur band-aid and Ranboo recounted an abridged version of the day he'd had.

Except for the large chest of medical supplies. He just said Tubbo had the bandaid in a bag on him. He lied, he felt awful, and that Sunday when they went to church he told Father Patrick, and his penance was only one go around of the rosary next time he was free.

But a zoo trip would be fun.

“The zoo?” Sister Anne repeats.

It’s early enough that none of the other kids are awake-- no one else is really awake except Sister Anne and the youngest, Helena. The other toddler had been adopted and it was just Helena who needed to be taken care of. She wasn’t even a year old yet, by their best guesses.

“Yeah, um. Those friends I mentioned asked if I could go with them to the zoo.”

“What day?”

“Saturday. I think.” He sends a quick message to Tubbo to clarify the date. It’s Saturday, which means it won’t get in the way of church.

Sister Anne nods. “Well, I’ll have to talk to Sister Joan and Sister Marie about it, obviously. We don’t want you wandering off and getting kidnapped or taken, do we?”

I’m old enough to handle myself, a small voice says in the back of his head, but he bites it down with a spoonful of cereal. It’s bland, but it’ll be better than Sister Joan’s cooking.

“But I think you’ll be allowed to, as long as you come back before sunset.” Sister Anne smiles, giving Helena another spoonful of baby food. “I’m glad you’ve made friends outside the orphanage, Ranboo.”

He doesn’t know what to say, so he only nods.

“I keep thinking we should put you in normal high school, but Sister Agnes would *never* agree to that.”

That piques Ranboo’s interest. “...Why not?”

“Oh-- and don’t you tell her this, alright?-- but she thinks that high schools are breeding grounds for sin.” Sister Anne comes the closest to *gossip* that she probably ever will. “I think most of it is her being steeped in tradition as she is, but she’s very stern in her ways. As we all know.”

There was a beat of silence. Ranboo can feel the sting of a ruler on his fingers, and he curls them back.

“But, I think it’s important for us to make friends both inside and outside our faith. It broadens our horizons and makes us fall more in love with God’s greatest creation. Other human beings.” She turns back to Helena, and gives her another airplane of applesauce.

A beat of silence. Ranboo checks his phone again, but Tubbo has gone quiet. Hopefully to sleep.

“I know what’ll *definitely* convince the others to let you go.” Sister Anne smiles, with a bit of a mischievous glint in her eyes. “Sister Joan will *love* this.”

Tommy's laugh is loud and a little bit annoying, but Ranboo would never say that to his face. Tubbo is laughing, too, and Ranboo feels his ears burn a little bit.

"It's-- it's not that bad, is it?"

"It's summer, why the hell are you having to worry about writing an *essay*?!" Tommy yells.

"I'm homeschooled. We don't get summer break." Ranboo explains. He has a different notebook than his journal on hand-- a smaller one. To take notes on. He has the essay prompt saved in his texts from Sister Anne. It was just a small research assignment. Find an animal to research and write about the animal's natural habitat, and list a few reasons why Saint Francis would find the animal, quote, "neat".

The last bit was Sister Anne's add-on.

They decided to meet up at the park, the middle ground between Tommy and Tubbo's neighborhood and the orphanage. Neither of them bothered to ask why Ranboo asked to meet there instead of just getting picked up at his house, which was nice.

He didn't want to tell them he was an orphan. It was... He'll *say* it. No. He'll think about it.

It is a little embarrassing.

Plus, he doesn't want to lose his friends over that. It's not a lie-- if it is, he'll go to reconciliation every Sunday if he has to-- it's just. Hiding the truth. Keeping a secret.

Friends keep secrets from each other, right? He doesn't *have* to be an open book to his friends. Even though it might make things a little easier.

Seeing Tommy's dad again was weird. His hair was still grown out, this time, it was left shaggy and to his chin, and the same feeling of admiration came back at the haircut that he had.

When Ranboo ages out of the orphanage, maybe he'll grow out his hair like that.

"Ah, Ranboo! Nice to meet you officially." The man-- Phil-- reaches out a hand.

Ranboo takes it. It's a very strong hand, and he's alarmed at first by the force of the handshake.

How do I act around someone's dad??? "You, too. Sir."

"No sirs around here. Just call me Phil."

"Or *Dad za!*" Tubbo interjects.

"Or Dadza, I suppose."

Ranboo didn't get it, but he let it slide.

The car isn't the yellow car that Wilbur drove around and had the day that they first met, it's a slightly larger gray one. There's someone sitting in the passenger seat in the front already.

"Oh, right. Ranboo, this is my other brother." Tommy said as they climbed into the car.

The man in the front turns around. He has pink hair that goes down to his waist, all braided back, and square glasses resting on his nose. He doesn't look particularly interested in anything, especially the trip to the zoo.

"Technoblade, Ranboo. Ranboo, Technoblade."

"Pleasure." His voice is monotone, and he turns back to the book that he's reading. Ranboo can't see the book.

"Oh, you-- you too." *What kind of name is Technoblade?* Ranboo can't help but wonder as the car engine starts.

Tubbo is squashed in the middle seat (unfortunate) between Ranboo and Tommy. He's used to trying to not take up too much space in a car and tries to lean more towards the side of the car to give Tubbo room.

It was weird. These are people he hasn't been living with for his whole life, and he was in a car with them going to the zoo. Or they could have lied and tricked him and they could be taking him out to a farm to kill him or make him a Satanist or something.

"So, Ranboo. You've never been to the zoo before?"

"No-- no, I haven't. It's just something that my-- my family hasn't been able to do much." He tries to not stumble over the word family, but it's awkward.

Hopefully no one notices.

"Well, don't worry about paying for anything, I'll cover it all."

"A-are you sure?"

"It's no problem!" Phil gives him a warm smile.

Ranboo feels a little more at ease, but it's interrupted by Tubbo.

"Do you think we can go to the gardens, too?" His eyes are sparkling with... something. Ranboo's not sure of the word, but it's something exciting and positive.

"You just wanna see the bees again, don't you?" Tommy teases.

"The bees are *great!* They're the best part!"

"No, the polar bears are the best part! They're so fierce and strong!"

This was going to be a long car ride.

Ranboo thinks that his prosopagnosia isn't that bad.

Granted, he's been around most of the same people his whole life. He messes up with the younger kids sometimes, especially when all the boys have the same haircut and all the girls wear their hair in braids, but he can pick up on little things, like Charlie's ginger hair or Christian's darker skin tone to recognize them.

The sisters are easy, too, because they all wear the habits and are all at different heights to an almost comical level. Their voices, too, are a dead giveaway.

But it's harder with Tommy and Tubbo. They walked up to him first, and he recognized their voices, but they don't really seem to have anything that gives them away quite yet other than their voices. Mr. Phil-- Tommy's Dad-- is even worse, though his hair stands out a bit more compared to the average person.

He had hoped that he would be able to stay close to Mr. Phil and Tommy and Tubbo and their older brother, Techno. Even though he'd never been around larger crowds and didn't exactly know how busy a zoo would be on a Saturday during the summer.

God, please, please, if you're listening, please help me, I can't find anyone. He gripped his notepad tighter and stood as still as he possibly could on the edge of a crowd of people.

He couldn't see anyone's face.

He hated not being able to see anyone's face. He could *see* faces, but he couldn't describe the eyes or a nose of someone, he could tell you their eye color and hair color but that was the extent of it.

This is why he likes animated movies more than real-life movies. This is why he never should've left, this is why he shouldn't have gotten lost, this is why--

Deep breaths. Panicking right now won't help anything. He leans against the brick wall next to the trash cans he's found himself at and takes a deep breath.

His phone buzzes.

TOMMY: ay where u at bruv

What.

It took a second to translate Tommy into English.

RANBOO: I don't know.

TOMMY: fuk

He glances up and looks around for any sign of where he could be near. The nearest pen has a family with a small child looking in, and he glances over the side to see what animal is there.

RANBOO: I'm by the lions.

TOMMY: how tf did u end up there thats like halfway across the zoo

RANBOO: I don't know. Sorry.

TOMMY: phil says hes in the cafe over there, look out for him

Oh, great. *He* has to be the one to look out for a man he's only met in person like, *twice*, in the middle of the day at a zoo crowded with a decent amount of people.

He twirls the pencil around in his fingers, looking out at the crowd. He can't recognize anyone. Phil had a-- he had a gray t-shirt on today.

Ranboo can count, like, *twenty* gray t-shirts.

He takes a deep breath. Steps back, back into the wall. There was no way he was going to be able to recognize anyone in this mess. There's a beat of hesitation, a brief moment of pause, before he gives in and pulls out his phone again.

RANBOO: Can you tell him to find me?

TOMMY: sure. U food?

TOMMY: *good

RANBOO: I'll explain later?

TOMMY: ok he sees u

Ranboo glances up, and looks at the crowd in front of him. It takes him a moment, but he spots a man in a gray t-shirt waving at him. *At* him, right? He squints.

He can't see the man's face.

God, please, let this be Phil. Don't let me embarrass myself like this, he prays, and makes his way through the crowd.

God hears his prayers.

"There you are, Ranboo. You good?"

"Yeah I'm-- I'm fine." He can't say *good to see someone I recognize*, because he can't technically recognize Phil that well yet except for the hair. "Sorry, I've just. Never been in a place with so many people."

"Techno and I went to grab a drink at a cafe, and that's pretty empty, if you need to take a breather." Phil offers. Ranboo doesn't decline.

The cafe is tropical rainforest themed, and has a few plushies and gifts that one could buy as a memento for the trip. Phil orders Ranboo a soda without caffeine and they sit down at a

table with Techno.

“Welcome back, Phil. You missed great stuff.”

Techno still has his nose in the book he was reading earlier.

Ranboo quirks an eyebrow at this, but doesn’t want to be seen as rude for asking aloud, *who brings a book to the zoo to read?* But if this is Tommy’s brother, Tommy “climb the shelf of a grocery store to get a cereal box”, maybe they’re all just *like that*. Wilbur did have a whole chest of medical supplies.

It kinda made sense, at the same time.

“Damn, guess I’ll have to ask you what I missed.”

Techno held the book up, and Ranboo was able to get a read of the cover. *The Odyssey, Homer*.

He’d heard of the book and had seen it in the library.

“Absolutely nothing worthwhile. Don’t even bother.” Techno says, and takes a sip of his coffee. It still looks to be steaming hot, but the man doesn’t flinch.

Phil only laughs, before turning to Ranboo. “Are you having a good time?”

He nods quickly in response. “Oh, yeah-- It’s interesting.” He’d never thought he would get that close to some of the animals he’d only seen in books. It wasn’t *close*, but it wasn’t exactly far, either. Ranboo keeps his eyes looking down at his drink, and the notebook he brought with him to scribble notes in of animals to write about for his homework.

The zoo had a curious white lion cub that had been pawing around in the exhibit. The birds were interesting, too-- some of them repeated the words that Tommy taunted at them perfectly. He had a lot of options, the only thing that was stopping him was indecision.

He’d figure out what to write about later.

Hopefully.

“That’s good.”

Ranboo never expected how awkward it would be talking to a friend’s dad. But here he was, sitting in that exact scenario as Tommy and Tubbo try and make their way quickly to the cafe so that they can regroup.

What had his life suddenly become?

Chapter End Notes

got a twitter now. won't use it much but it exists twitter.com/cosmonaughtt

ANYWAY yay!! some family dynamics! I haven't been to a zoo in years but it's the first thing that popped into head. Honestly, if it weren't for the pandemic, I would love to go to a zoo. Or anything, really. I'm tired of being locked up so much.

Of course none of the nuns I write are based on actual people and a few are more of a caricature of nuns based on what I've heard from my family who have all been through Catholic schooling, but it's not all sunshine and rainbows at the orphanage with Ranboo. Who would've thought ;)

I have up to chapter 5 pre-written. I don't know how I'm churning out these chapters so fast, but I guess when a story needs to be told, it can't be stopped. But just you wait for these future chapters B)

I'll probably post every couple of days now, when I get writing done. More on the weekends. IDK how long this is gonna be. I write on the seat of my pants. I don't even know the plot y'all.

But I hope you enjoyed this chapter! :D

Why Do I Ruin Every Good Thing I Get?

Chapter Notes

content warning:

- descriptions of a panic attack; not too graphic it's more metaphorical

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Of course, his pen decides to die out in the middle of him writing. Of course.

It's not that he doesn't have any other pens around him. Ranboo has quite the collection of pens formed, of black ballpoint that he does all his classwork in, and writes in his journal in, so another dead one doesn't mean much to him in the long run.

But it happens in the middle of him writing down the details of the zoo, and he hates how the ink fades out in the middle of one of his words.

It's a simple *thunk* in the little trash can by his desk and a *woosh* of his desk drawer opening to find another pen. His hands graze one of his older journals, from a few years ago, when he first started to write down his days and thoughts in order to remember things.

His memory issues are getting better. Before he would have no idea of the things that happened the previous day. The nuns were wearing thin on patience when Sister Marie handed him a composition notebook to write down all his thoughts in so hopefully he'd remember when he promised to read a kid a book or when he promised to help someone make dinner.

It was much better than it used to be, but it also wasn't.

He sighs, finishing the sentence he was writing before shutting his current journal. It lays comfortably under his pillow when he's done. Not out of a shame of hiding from any of the Sisters, or because he doesn't want them to know. They never look through his journal because it's mostly *boring*, in Sister Anne's words.

It was a habit for when he still lived in a room with other boys. They would find it and read it and laugh at him. Even if it was under his pillow, they would still sneak it out when Ranboo wasn't around and read it. But now that he's alone, he should feel free to leave it out wherever. None of the younger kids come into his room anymore.

The echo of the key locking, and a faint "Goodnight, Ranboo," from the other side of the door seals his fate for the night.

He lets himself fall back on the bed. He hasn't changed out of the clothes he wore to the zoo, yet, even though they're a little sweaty. He had wanted to get a quick shower out of the way before it was night time and his door was locked, but it seemed like the hours got away from him. And he forgot. Too focused on trying to remember every detail of the day he had just had.

It was one of the best days he's ever had.

Even though it started out a little awkward. Phil and Techno were strange adults, but if they were related to Tommy, then it made sense that they were all that way. Tubbo, too, was strange, but not in the way that Tommy and his family seemed to radiate.

The zoo was interesting, too. He'd finished his report on the lions he had saw and turned it in as soon as he had finished it, and then immediately went to recount the details of the day. From Tommy taunting the birds and getting attacked, to Tubbo in the garden and how happy he was, to the awkward conversation that occurred in the cafe with Phil and Techno.

He didn't want to forget *anything*.

The Odyssey.

It was strange his brain jumped to that so quickly. The book Techno had been reading. Ranboo hadn't gotten to ask what it was about, or if he liked it or not. The eldest brother had his nose buried in it for most of the day, and was in the cafe the entire time, but he had seemed to finish it by the end of the day and mostly made a few snide quips to Phil in the car on the way back to the park.

He wondered if he would be able to find a copy of it at the library on their next library trip.

The flicker of lights and laughter down the hall brought him back to the present moment. The electricity was worn down in the old orphanage, and they should *definitely* get it checked out before a fire starts, but he hadn't seen any electricians in the building in years.

Ranboo glanced around his room, laying back down in his bed a bit more. He didn't-- he didn't want to go to sleep. He didn't want to sleepwalk again, wake up in a different place, and wonder what he had done in his sleeping state to get there. The desk thing hadn't been that big of a deal to him, he just had a small sore spot on his head that was gone by the afternoon, but not being able to stop sleepwalking made him upset.

He closed his eyes. His body went through the motions easily and quickly-- a tap to the forehead, his sternum, and both his shoulders. He clasped his fingers together.

If You are listening. Please. Please, stop this sleepwalking.

I don't know what I did to deserve it. I'm sorry for whatever sins I have done to make You punish me like this.

I don't want to be like this anymore. I want to be able to sleep without the Sisters locking my door.

Please, God. Jesus. Mary. All the Saints. I ask for your forgiveness and healing.

Amen.

He opened his eyes.

The room was still the same. The lights flickered again, and he heard loud footsteps-- Sister Joan-- going down the hall to where the laughter was coming from. That wouldn't be good, Ranboo knew, but he didn't want to listen to whatever scolding the younger kids would get. Instead, he pulled out his phone, plugged his earbuds in, and opened up his music.

The music that played in the car was interesting. It was much harsher than what the nuns had downloaded on his phone for him, but it had an interesting beat. He couldn't understand any of the words, but he didn't want to ask. He didn't think of asking. He was more interested in whatever Tommy and Tubbo were talking about, to distract from the way that Phil drove once they hit the highway.

But all he had were the songs the sisters downloaded and a few extra-- instrumentals, of music that would help him study. Beethoven. Bach. Mozart.

Soft piano tones started playing through the earbuds, and Ranboo closed his eyes, just for a second.

And promptly fell asleep.

It isn't often that he wakes up, mid-sleepwalk.

He's standing, still, but waking up makes his legs stumble and give out under him. He reaches out and catches himself on the counter.

He blinks in the dark light. The feeling of tile underneath his fingers makes his heart sink. He doesn't want to look anywhere but up, but looking at the tile under him, makes him realize one thing.

It makes his body feel cold. Not just because of his bare feet on the tile, but his entire body feels submerged in ice.

It isn't a dream.

Ranboo uses the kitchen counter to help himself stand back up. It's eerily quiet in the house at night, when the entire orphanage is asleep. Even Sister Anne, who is up at periodic hours, is probably asleep at this time. The clock on the microwave gives away the time.

3:02 AM blinks back at him angrily.

Ranboo walks over to the small, kitchen table. They don't use it for much unless it's one person, grabbing a snack, but it's situated by a bay window with a view out to the backyard. The moon shines bright light on the yard, illuminating the little bit of water in the plastic

kiddie pool in the backyard, reflecting off the fresh dew in the yard. It's bright enough to light up the kitchen, ever so slightly.

He takes a deep breath, walking closely to the window, staring out with wide eyes. His thoughts are going too fast for him.

How did I end up here what happened where am I I'm in the kitchen what was I doing was I asleep where did it go how did I get here---

Ranboo tears his eyes away from the backyard and looks around the kitchen. It feels frozen in time, but that was ridiculous-- the time blinks back *3:05 AM* on the clock.

One of the younger kids probably got the keys off one of the sisters and unlocked his door. Right, yes. That was completely reasonable, Ranboo told himself, as he slowly shuffled out of the kitchen and through the main room. The wood creaked under his feet slightly, but he knew all the sisters slept like logs.

It was why they locked his door at night. They wouldn't hear him shuffling around, sleepwalking, and would find him passed out in a random place in the morning. Once in the living room, sprawled out on the old couch, with a bible in one of his hands. Once, one of the younger girls found him passed out in the girls bathroom.

Once they found him outside in the yard.

He counts his blessings as he goes up the stairs. I'm awake now. I didn't wake up in a weird place with a sister staring over me. I didn't end up hurting myself this time. I didn't freak any of the younger kids out. I didn't destroy anything.

He gets to his door, still counting blessings. *I'm not hurt. I'm awake. I'm awake. I'm awake.*

He turns the knob.

It's still locked.

If his heart had fallen before, into his gut, then it promptly tumbled out of his body and shattered on the ground in a million pieces. He jiggles with the knob again, and it's still locked.

How? How? How how how how how how how

Ranboo breaks himself away from the door, gasping loudly. He tries to calm his breath. He shakes his head, as if shaking off the bad thoughts, as if it would help, but his thoughts are starting to run again faster, and he can't keep up.

Did he get out the window? No, his windows are usually locked. They have screens on them. Someone would've heard him fall out of a window, hopefully. He would be in *pain*, right? If he had fallen out of a window? All the other doors are locked in the house. There is no way he should have gotten back in.

It feels like he's on some sort of ship, as his thoughts engulf him and he steps back into the wall behind him and slides down. A ship in the middle of a storm. The waves are rocking the boat, back and forth. He doesn't know how to swim, and the salty brine stings his skin.

How how how how how how--

It's Sister Joan who finds him passed out, right outside his locked bedroom door, the next morning.

Sunday is rough.

Ranboo had been awoken right outside his bedroom door. He didn't have concrete memory of what had happened-- he woke up at some point, outside of his bedroom. He didn't feel good, but not sick enough to miss mass, so he goes through the motions of getting ready for church.

He gets a shower in, this time Sister Anne lets him borrow hers since the other boys are taking too long in the boys shower, but he doesn't revel in the way the hot water warms up his freezing skin, despite the fact that it was in the middle of the summer. The button-up slips on just as easily as every Sunday, his slacks and belt fit just fine, all that happens is that he's helped with his tie by Sister Anne before they leave and pile into the van to drive to church together.

Father Patrick leads, as usual. Ranboo goes through the motions, as usual. He stands when everyone stands, recites the Nicene Creed.

and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Sister Agnes stands close to him. She keeps her eyes on him, a little too much. Not in a gross way, but in a distrustful way.

No one talked about what had happened that night, other than Sister Joan who had found him and told the other kids to quiet down in the ride to mass as Ranboo sat awkwardly squished against the side of the van and looked out the window. His earbuds were in but no music was playing.

His knuckles sting as they kneel down for prayer, as Father Patrick blesses the communion.

Does he feel worthy enough to receive it this week? Has he sinned so badly, that God has decided to punish him for it?

He still gets up and takes it, and a sip of the wine as well.

The wine never tastes like what he expects, but it feels like it tastes a little more like actual blood today. He's also chewed through one of his lips, so that could explain the metallic taste this week.

As the younger kids load up into the van to get driven off to the park, Sister Agnes stops Ranboo and gives him a rosary.

“All twenty mysteries today.” She says curtly, as he wraps the wooden beads around his hand. It isn’t the plastic one that he has on his nightstand in his room, painted a bright red-and-green pattern from a craft night one night. This one is wood, carved delicately enough for him to still feel the grains on the wood. “When you’re done, text Anne or Marie and they’ll come walk over to pick you up.”

“Yes, ma’am.” Ranboo’s voice is raw. He nods. Sister Agnes nods back, and ducks into the passenger side of the van next to Sister Marie. The van drives off, a small cloud of dust forming in its wake, as the young children are carted off quickly to home to change so they can go to the park and get rid of all the extra energy.

He notices Charlie’s face looking at him through the window as they drive off.

It’s a beautiful Sunday morning. The sun hasn’t hit noon yet, and it isn’t too warm out, but Ranboo still feels like his skin is ice cold. There aren’t any clouds in the sky. He should be smiling at the beautiful weather, but everything feels empty and cold, and he grips the rosary tightly in his hands.

He doesn’t want to go back into the church. It’s empty, now, or almost empty. Families have all piled back into their cars in their best Sunday dress and are off to get brunch somewhere, or go back home and enjoy a quiet summer day together. But he doesn’t want to go back into the church and kneel, for however long it takes to pray all twenty mysteries of the rosary, just quite yet.

Ranboo pulls out his phone and checks the time, and notices he has a text from Tubbo.

TUBBO: I know you have church Sundays but are you free this afternoon? :)

The message from his friend almost hurts him to read, and he puts his phone back into his pocket. If he had felt bad before, he felt even *worse* now. At least, the nuns were kind and didn’t take his phone, but he probably wouldn’t be able to leave the orphanage for a good few days. If not weeks.

If not months, with Sister Agnes involved.

He rubs away the tears forming at his eyes, gripping the rosary tighter. Not enough to break it in his hands. He doesn’t have that strength. But he feels the beats digging into his palms and it reminds him to go and pray, get it all done and over with. And then he can deal with everything else.

And then he can deal with whatever God throws his way.

Even though, all his thoughts, all his prayers seem to be, contain only one word.

Why?

Why?

Why?

TUBBO: hey what's uuupp

TUBBO: ranboo

TUBBO: ranboo do you wanna hear about the latest episode of Grey's Anatomy

TUBBO: actually, hold on, do you even know what that is? I can sum it up for you :)

TUBBO: or not hahaha

TUBBO: ranboo?

TUBBO: ranbooooooo

TUBBO: ranboooo answer your phooonnneee

TOMMY: ay ranboo please fucking answer tubbo he won't shut up

TOMMY: ranboo

TOMMY: ranboo if you don't answer me either i WILL find where u live and make you answer

TOMMY: or just be like. incredibly annoying.

TOMMY: so pick ur poison mate

TOMMY: okay this isn't funny, answer your phone

TUBBO: is everything okay ranboo?

TUBBO: i know you have summer classes and stuff but you should be free right now, right?

TUBBO: unless it's finals. then best of luck.

TUBBO: but please respond soon, i'm getting a little worried

TOMMY: ay wtf it's been three days

TOMMY: do you just not wanna b friends anymore?

TOMMY: at least have the balls to say it to tubbo. Idon't care if you dont talk to me anymore

TOMMY: but if you're gonna ghost us at least tell tubbo

It's raining again.

Another summer storm had been forecasted to hit Tuesday, but it came a little later. Thursday evenings are never anything spectacular, in Ranboo's opinion.

They exist only as the barrier between Wednesday and Friday. The middle of the week and the end of the week, with classes, at least, in his case. He doesn't like Thursdays that much, because nothing really seems to happen on Thursday.

He'll be getting his phone back Friday. He's looking forward to that. He didn't have time to text Tommy or Tubbo and tell them that he was. What's the word?

Grounded?

He doesn't understand why he's grounded. The Sisters won't explain *why*. Only Sister Anne has looked at him in the eye after Sunday, with the same warm, friendly smile.

It's the time that he first started sleepwalking, all over again. His doors are locked and Sister Agnes has scheduled a worker to put bars over the window, and when his door is locked at night, a chair is pushed up against the door to protect himself from getting out again.

No one's talked about how Ranboo got out of his room without unlocking the door. Which is fine. Sometimes... Sometimes *weird* things happen, he supposes.

But he's *grounded*, or whatever the orphanage-equivalent is of being grounded. To be grounded, you have to have a parent tell you you're grounded. His caregivers didn't say anything like that, only that he couldn't go out of the house for the next week, and to give them his phone.

Not being able to listen to music is weird. It'd been a nice way to escape. Maybe he needed time away from it, so it wouldn't get too addictive. He still has books, he still has his journal, that he's scribbled in every now and then.

No recounting of days, when they're all the same.

Other thoughts, this time.

I don't know why they're treating me like this. I don't even know what I did.

How did I get out if the door was locked?

I hope my friends are okay. I hope they won't be mad.

Dinner is called for, but Ranboo doesn't feel too hungry. He had a late snack to help him focus on history reading, and it hadn't been that long ago, but he still follows the younger kids down the stairs.

Charlie waits for him at the top of the stairs. She holds out her hand and he takes it. Her hair is awkwardly parted-- at some point during the week, she had chopped both her braids off with scissors, and it was a choppy, chin-length cut now. The nuns had done their best to repair what they could.

It's pork for dinner. He's not particularly excited, but he loads up on the vegetables and takes a smaller piece of pork to eat instead. The dining table is in the usual messy state that it is, with kids sitting and chatting loudly after prayer that they didn't wait for Ranboo to start.

Everything is dull. He still feels cold.

Sister Anne asks him to help with dishes as the younger kids begin to fight over who gets to take a shower first tonight. He never gets to go first, so he helps.

"How are you today, Ranboo?" Sister Anne asks as she begins to rinse off the dishes. Ranboo opens the dishwasher to load them into, and takes the first plate carefully to not drop it.

"Eh, the usual." He replies. What more can he say?

"Haven't seen you all day, is all." Sister Anne says. She hands him a glass. "Working hard, or hardly working?"

"...Working hard...?"

"That's good. You're a smart kid." She gives him a smile. Ranboo wishes he could recognize the smile entirely, but he can't focus on her face enough without getting frustrated at not being able to see it. "Do you need any help with anything?"

"No. I don't think so." It's all easy to understand. It was mostly reading through history, about one of the world wars. He should know which war he was reading about, but it's escaping him now. Stupid memory.

"Well, if you ever need any help, I'm just as qualified as everyone else to help you." She says. Another plate, a fork. "How have you been sleeping?"

Hardly. Not at all. "Good."

"Any sleepwalking?"

Yes. "Yes."

It's waking up mid re-folding all his laundry. It's waking up fallen out of his desk again. It's waking up, once at his door, with his hand around the knob.

"I'm talking to Sister Agnes about taking you to see a sleep doctor." She explains. "I don't... I don't understand everyone's hesitation against it. They all seem dead set on thinking it's punishment from the Almighty, but... It's something else, I know."

That's reassuring, Ranboo thinks, as he remembers to turn the knives to face down in the dishwasher. Too many small kids, too many times someone has been stabbed by a knife and

cried from the injury.

"I'm sorry your week has been rough, Ranboo. You didn't deserve to be grounded over something you can't control." She hands him more plates and cups. He puts them away. "Can you keep a secret, Ranboo?"

"Um. I guess. I probably won't remember it." He laughs nervously at the joke, and it gets a chuckle from the Sister as well.

"Well, I'm sure you'll remember it." She reaches into her habit-- a pocket-- and pulls out his cellphone. She sets it in his hand. "You're supposed to get it back tomorrow, but Sister Agnes won't notice if you get it back tonight before bed or tomorrow when you wake up."

She winks.

"T-Thank you." He drops it into the pocket of his pants. The earbuds have been laid alone on his nightstand for so long. He could listen to music again. It would be nice to have it back.

"You're welcome, Ranboo." She sighs, and puts the remaining dishes in the dishwasher herself. Despite their ages, all the nuns are auspiciously spry and energetic. Maybe it's what they have to be to work in an orphanage. Sister Anne glances out the bay window in the kitchen.

The storm rains on.

"Maybe we'll have a sunny day tomorrow, too."

TOMMY: bitch

Chapter End Notes

NOT ME ACCIDENTALLY POSTING THIS CHAPTER A DAY BEFORE IT WAS DONE OOPS

angst time

I'm on twitter [@cosmonaughtt](#) if that means anything to y'all B)

Don't worry about Ranboo. I'm sure everything is fine :)

edit 2/16 like 4 hours after I originally posted it: added a content warning before the chapter because he DOES have a panic attack at that one point but it's not graphic or very well descriptive

Okay, Everything Is Fine. I Think.

Chapter Notes

I was originally gonna wait to post this but Ranboo hit 50k subs and it's one am and I am happy so you guys can get it early :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

TUBBO: do you think Ranboo will be at the park today, tommy?

TOMMY: idfk

TUBBO: it's been a while. I'm worried

TOMMY: he's probably just another bitch that ghosted us. Got a free fucking trip to the zoo, at least.

TUBBO: i don't think so! he's too nice!

TOMMY: that's what u said about that gregory dude.

TUBBO: gregory is a totally different set of circumstances to ranboo. first of all, i am offended by that comparison.

TUBBO: second of all, for all we know his phone could've broke and they couldn't have gotten it repaired. we don't know much about his home life, tommy

TOMMY: whatever :P

TOMMY: you still on for sparring later?

TUBBO: sure! B)

TOMMY: i'll kick your ass

TUBBO: i'll kick YOUR ass

TOMMY: fuck no you won't

TOMMY: fuck u

“Ranboo!”

The cheery voice of Tubbo rings out. It takes a moment for Ranboo to look around, and even then, he doesn't notice Tubbo until he's close to his face and waves directly *at* him. Tommy being by his side helps, and they're both wearing the same shirts that they wore when they first met at the park.

Tubbo got a haircut.

"Oh, uh. Hi."

"Officially un-grounded, eh?" Tommy snarks. "Didn't take you much for a bad-boy type."

"I didn't, um." He didn't want to talk about *why* he was grounded. He didn't want to think about it, because it made him think of sleepwalking, and--

"Tommy, leave him alone." Tubbo rolled his eyes. "We're just glad to see you back in the flesh."

"It's nice to be outside again, too."

"You weren't allowed to leave your house?" Tommy asks, his voice much louder and angrier and directed at... Well, not Ranboo, which was nice. "Even when Phil grounds me he at least lets me fuckin' see Tubbo!"

"Well, there was that one time--"

"It didn't last a day cause I snuck out when he wasn't lookin'." Tommy winked at Ranboo. "Phil was *pissed* after, though, but nothin' can keep me and Tubbo apart for long!"

"Oh." Ranboo blinks. He fidgets awkwardly with the edge of his shirt. "Well, um... How have you two been doing?"

It's relaxing to see his friends again. He still feels a little cold, but the warmth of the sun on his skin and being by two people his age is nice. It's nice, they go to the ice cream place again and Ranboo tries chocolate ice cream and it's really good, and they sit outside and enjoy the warmth of the sun. Only Tommy has his skateboard that day, he's trying to master a trick that Ranboo doesn't understand.

Tubbo is the emotional support, but still laughs when Tommy messes up and lands on his face.

They spend most of the day together. The world is still a little muddy from the previous storm, but the sun is shining brightly again. They walk through the park as Tommy breezes by them on his skateboard and gives them a peace sign.

Ranboo doesn't wander too deep into the paths at the park, the small trails that lead by a small creek with a bridge over it. He's used to keeping by the playground with the younger kids. It's quieter in the trails. He'll have to keep that in mind.

"So, if you don't mind me asking, what *did* you get grounded for?" Tubbo asks as they hit the bridge. Tommy had fallen on his face again and was carrying his board now, furiously texting

someone about something. Ranboo didn't know.

"Oh, um. If I'll be honest, I don't even understand why I was grounded."

"That's awful. At least when I used to get grounded, my family told me why. 'Tubbo, you were out past curfew,' or 'Tubbo, stop playing video games and focus on schoolwork', y'know, stuff like that." He imitates his parents by dropping his voice as he speaks, and it gets a chuckle from Ranboo.

"Yeah, no. I don't..." He sighs, and looks out over the edge of the bridge. The creek doesn't look too deep, but he wouldn't want to fall over the edge and find out.

He takes a deep breath.

"I sleepwalk."

"Oh?" Tubbo glances at him at that. They don't lock eyes-- which is nice. Eyes might be one of the few things that actually stand out on someone's face for Ranboo, but it doesn't make them any less creepy and unnerving to look at.

"And, um. I usually have to lock my room at night or I end up in weird places. The kitchen, the living room... I actually woke up outside once. That was... not fun."

"Doesn't sound like it." Tommy's tuned into the conversation now, leaning his back against the edge of the bridge.

"Yeah, but I. I don't really know what happened, but I got out of my room the other night, and... they were upset. That's why I was grounded." He tries to avoid language that directly ties him to the orphanage. It's the only orphanage in town-- maybe, the whole county, since most kids end up in the foster system, not an orphanage-- and he still doesn't want his friends to know he doesn't have a family.

He also doesn't mention the rosary that took him two hours to pray because he couldn't focus. Sister Agnes was happy more that he spent it all in the church and took his time, at least there wasn't any punishment there.

"Why would they be upset? Can you control yourself when you sleepwalk?" Tubbo asks.

"...No, I can't."

"Then it's fuckin' stupid that you were grounded." Tommy says. "I'll fight your mom and dad. Or your moms. Or your dads. Or your non-gendered parental figures."

"Um." *Dads? Moms?* But even though the image of Tommy taking on the nuns was funny for a second, he pushed the mental image away. "No, I don't think you need to do that."

"Just let me know when you need me to, I can really fuck someone up."

"*Sure* you can, Tommy." Tubbo rolled his eyes. He didn't even try to hide the mumble under his breath, and even grinned at Tommy when the blond turned red. Not literally red, but

Ranboo could see his cheeks flush an angry pink.

“Ay, are those fighting words?” He takes a big gasp for air, trying to size himself up. Tommy is a good bit taller than Tubbo, but Ranboo definitely has the height advantage of the three.

“Not *now*, but maybe later.” Tubbo turns back to Ranboo. “Sorry you have to deal with parents like that who don’t understand.”

“Yeah.” *Parents.*

They stand at the bridge for a little bit, enjoying the tranquil nature around them.

It’s Tommy who breaks the silence. As usual.

“Do you need glasses, Ranboo?”

“What?” The question came out of seemingly nowhere. He couldn’t even think of where Tommy’s mind had gotten the idea from. Even though the orphanage had decent amounts of money saved up for annual physicals for everyone, and Ranboo has gone to a doctor at least once a year since he first arrived, there had never been any problems with his eyes.

They were perfect, as far as he was aware.

“I mean, just. Earlier today, you didn’t see Tubbo an’ I until we were right in front of ya.” Tommy shrugs. “Just thought you might need glasses.”

“Oh, that.” He feels his ears flush. He just wants to say-- *oh, it’s my poor memory, I forget sometimes*-- but that sounds even worse than just the plain truth. He takes a breath. It’s a little shaky. Everyone at the orphanage knows Ranboo has an issue with seeing faces, but he’s never had to explicitly *tell* anyone before. “I, um. I have prosopagnosia.”

“What’s that?” Tommy deadpans. Tubbo glares at him, but since Ranboo is in the middle, he can’t get an elbow or a friendly hit upside the head.

“It’s face blindness, right?” Tubbo asks, and the pieces click in his head so suddenly. “*That’s* why you had to get Phil to come get you! You wouldn’t be able to recognize him!”

“Yeah. It’s usually easy to identify people by, like. Their voices and stuff but when they’re not talking it’s harder.” He feels like a little weight has been lifted off his chest. He doesn’t know why.

“Face blindness and sleepwalking? Must suck to be you.”

“Eh, kinda.” Ranboo gets a reply in before Tubbo can, and Tommy does his loud laugh. It’s more of a chortle than anything, and Tubbo joins in with a laugh of his own, too.

He hadn’t even touched on the *orphan* thing yet, but he was only willing to be an open book for so long.

The grocery store seems to be a little more lively than it was before.

The warm beach decorations set up at the beginning of summer had long been taken down, slowly replaced by *back to school* essentials and displays, despite the fact there was still a month left of normal summer.

Ranboo was running out of room in his current journal, so it was nice that Sister Joan took him grocery shopping that week. He could pick up a new notebook to write down all his thoughts.

All his thoughts. It had become less of a daily recount, to more personal thoughts. He still hides it under the pillow, even though everyone knows where it is.

He finds a notebook nestled in the back-to-school section. It's a composition book, but it's a different color. This one is green.

He likes the color.

Watching a kid go has never been as bittersweet as this, Ranboo thinks, watching the short-haired Charlie leave out the door with her new family.

It hadn't been any of what the nuns, or any of the children, were expecting. Ranboo worried that Charlie would have to age out of the system like he was most likely going to-- she doesn't talk to people, she cut her own hair and refused to wear the Sunday dresses that the nuns put her into.

All in all, she was, and quote, 'a bit of a brat'. Not that Ranboo could relate-- he had spent most of his time at the orphanage listening to every word that the Sisters told him, following everything to a T, so he could be the next kid out the door with a loving family and new home.

Not that *that* worked for him. Even though he was an amazing child, no one wanted him.

Yet, he couldn't feel but a twinge of jealousy as Charlie gave him one last hug before leaving with her new parents. They were parents in town who had spent years trying to have a child of their own, and when they realized they couldn't, they came to the orphanage to see the young children, but Charlie stood out to them. Even though she was older, even though she had a temper and did things her own way and didn't speak to anyone, they decided that Charlie was the one.

Ranboo wonders what it feels like. To finally be *seen*, as a kid, by adults, and to be taken into warm, loving arms.

He's had hugs from Sister Anne before, trying to calm him down from waking up in the living room during the beginning of his sleepwalking and not understanding where he was or what had happened. They were soft and warm, but they weren't the loving embrace of a family.

Charlie's hug was probably the closest.

She looks him up in the eye as her new parents are waiting by the door and hands him something, a piece of paper that's folded up into the smallest square imaginable. Ranboo doesn't have time to wonder how she was able to do that before she gives him a faint smile and waves goodbye, leaving through the door she had come in through only months prior.

It's bittersweet. Whenever a kid gets adopted, the entire orphanage sees them off. The younger kids are waving and cheering and saying, *you better visit!*, but the cheers and waves are never fully truthful. They're always tinted with waves of jealousy from everyone.

Why not me? Why couldn't it be me?

Maybe not Ranboo, that much, anymore, because he's the oldest and no one goes around adopting teenagers that much. No one would want him even if he was a kid, with his poor memory and face blindness and sleepwalking. He was too much of a trouble to deal with; all he had to do was pray that his eighteenth birthday would come sooner than he expected.

"Alright, everyone, back to your homework." Sister Joan turns around, crossing her arms. All the kids groan and turn back to walk back to the chapel. She follows behind them close, to make sure the kids aren't dilly-dallying or trying to get out of it like they usually do. Ranboo watches them leave, and he's alone in the main entrance again, holding the piece of paper that Charlie gave him.

He opens it.

It's a drawing-- Charlie was never the sort of kid for many words, Ranboo couldn't relate. But it was a drawing of the two of them. It's got the style of a nine-year-old, though the faces are actually quite good despite the awkward-proportioned bodies, and they're standing in what looks like a field. There's a hot air balloon in the distance with two other people on it.

He squints at the hot air balloon.

One of the people wears red and the other green-- the green person has brown hair, the red person has blond hair.

It's uncanny that it resembles Tommy and Tubbo, off in the distance. It's just a coincidence though-- neither of his friends had ever seen anyone in the orphanage or the orphanage itself, as far as Ranboo was aware. There was no way that their paths could have crossed, right?

He glances back at the door. Charlie is long-gone now. His hands feel a little cold.

"Ranboo, are you alright?" Sister Marie asks, as she walks back into the main room with a broom in hand.

"Oh, uh, yes, I am." He folds the drawing up and shoves it in his pocket. "Sorry, just got lost in thought."

"As you seem to do quite often." Sister Marie speaks with harsher tones than the other nuns (excluding Sister Agnes), and she starts to get back to sweeping the dust pile she had started

before the adoption had been finalized and Charlie was to leave. "Best get back to your studies, too, or Joan'll assign you more work."

"Right." *Idle hands are the devil's workshop.* Even though he had finished all his work for the day, it was lightly raining out. He couldn't leave the orphanage during the rain. It just wasn't allowed.

Which was fine with him.

He didn't like the rain, anyway.

There's a beat of silence as he gets back up into his room. There are some loose papers scattered on his desk of math problems that he's all but solved now, a few history books and a catechism on top. They were beginning to push him more into being confirmed-- Pentecost was still but a year away, but the Sisters wanted him to be on top of everything all the time, including picking a saint for that day.

He doesn't know about it. He doesn't know who to pick-- he pushes the catechism to the side. And the saint book that had been wedged under it. He pushes it all to the side. He'll work on it, later.

Turning his head around to make sure he hadn't forgotten to shut the door, he grabs his journal. This time it was at his desk, because he was trying to organize a few extra thoughts about Charlie leaving before they were all called down to give her a final Lord's prayer and say their goodbyes. He takes out the drawing she gave him and slides it into the back, between the cardboard backing of the notebook and the papers itself, before looking back at the green cover.

It's got, just like all of his other notebooks, *DO NOT READ* scribbled on the front of it with a permanent marker, where the subject should go. He did it as a child when he was still rooming with other boys his own age, but it was never respected. Even when they were caught by the nuns reading his book, they barely got scolded.

He sighs, setting the journal back down on his desk.

He's a little sleepy. He hasn't slept that well since the incident, and when he did sleep well, he would wake up, half in his closet, half off his desk, or somewhere else in his room. At least he hadn't gotten out yet-- the locked door and the chair prevented him from getting out however he got out the last time. The people Sister Agnes hired had come and put bars in over his window, so he couldn't get out either.

Ranboo glances to the window in question. The metal bars are solid black and stand out against the gray-blue sky that the rain falls from. Opening the window would give a cool breeze through his room, but his hands were already a little chilly and he didn't want to be *that person* who put on a sweater during a summer rain.

Maybe they'll take down the bars if his sleepwalking stops. When the nuns can trust him again.

Chapter End Notes

Also don't @ me for leaving vague replies to your comments last chapter for it to be fine. I gotta keep y'all on your toes B)

I'm not 100% feeling the fic name anymore because it was just something I threw on to title it, I'm going to try and figure out something cool that still has that sick ~religious symbolism~, so if the title randomly changes at some point, y'all know why B)

Side note-- if I see any of you guys talking about this on like. twitter or tiktok i will literally spontaneously combust on the spot
See you guys in the next chapter!

blah blah blah [twitter](#)

(P.S. just finished 'oh, we can be heroes' and OUCH <3)

I Was Wrong, Nothing Is Actually Fine :)

Chapter Notes

content warning:

- a bit of graphic body horror. none of the main boys. do not worry, they are safe for now <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It stares at the trio of boys in the woods. The blond is leading the pack, laughing annoyingly loud, followed closely by the brunet. The third, taller boy-- with dark hair flecked with bits of gray, premature gray, at such a young age, how sad-- follows behind awkwardly.

The third boy is what attracts him the most. Its known of the existence of the two boys for so long. Its seen them since they were young, knew of what they could do before they did, so when a third boy came into the group, it intrigued it.

People like them don't bond with just anybody, and it could tell there was something interesting with the tall boy.

He has spoken of sleepwalking and face blindness. He's never spoken of home, but when it follows the boy home, it isn't a home, it's an orphanage. An orphan. No family.

It tries to remember all of them that he's encountered. But it can't think of any like the tall boy.

The orphanage is a weird place. It is run by very pious, religious people, and the boy follows their every word. Is he really religious, too? Or is it all a front, an act, to play so that the boy does not get hurt any more than he already has?

It dances between the tree branches to follow the boys. The smaller form allows him to follow people without being noticed. The boys are talking about something. School. Education.

It doesn't care about that.

It is just a predator hunting its prey...

Summer is coming close to its end. It's only a manner of weeks before normal school starts back up, which means that there will be less time for Ranboo to hang out with Tommy and Tubbo.

They keep trying to convince him to get a “discord” account, easier to keep in contact with him, but he says that his caregivers would be upset if he got an app called *Discord*. Not the

word caregivers. He doesn't say who, not much more than *they wouldn't like this, they wouldn't like that, I'm sorry...*

Tommy says to do it anyway, but Ranboo can't.

He just. He just can't.

It's dropped shortly after that, and they try to go back to their walk on the trail as normally as they possibly can. As normal as they usually do. The air is still a little tense, and Ranboo is drowning in both his thoughts and the humidity of the late summer day.

It's for the best, that school is starting back up, that you'll see them less, a part of him says in his head. It's not a nice part of him, Ranboo recognizes, one that sounds like Father Patrick and the Sisters and everyone who has taken care of him but also himself at the same time.
More time to focus and study and pray.

But this summer had been the most unforgettable one that he's ever had-- even with memory problems, it was easier to remember the days he spent with Tommy and Tubbo than the days that he didn't. He's able to get out of the orphanage and see more of their small town-- not as small as it seems when he's in the seat of a car. It used to feel so small and like he was looking at the town as a picture, as just something on the television, as they drove by, but now he can walk and go to the places they would pass by and it would feel real.

It was a weird feeling. He doesn't want to forget it. He's scribbled words to try and describe it in the margins of his journal but none of them ever fit quite right.

He doesn't want the summer to end.

Neither do the other two, but they have as much control of it as Ranboo-- none.

"We could do study sessions! At, like, the library and stuff." Tubbo suggests.

They've moved down towards the creek that winds through the park. The bridge is a little ways away and above them. The creek is as clear as ever, winding in a direction under the bridge and a direction into a sewer. Not the kind that has to deal with anything flushed, it allows the creek to dig under a nearby road.

Tommy flips a few rocks over, looking for crawfish to torment, but he laughs after Tubbo speaks.

"Study?!"

"You know *you* need to study more, Toms." Tubbo retorts. "Wouldn't you want to try and get better grades this year?"

He just blows a raspberry at Tubbo in response.

"Studying's for pussies!" He flips over a rock, and the water sprays a bit everywhere. "Damn it!"

Ranboo's sitting on the edge-- although it is quite uncomfortable, sitting on a large rock covered in mostly dry dirt-- watching Tommy hunt for crawfish. The water sprays at his sneakers, and he flinches instinctually.

"Your math grades could surely stand to test that theory!" Tubbo laughs back. "And history, and english... And most sciences..."

"You don't need to rat him out like that, Tubbo." Ranboo says.

"See? Ranboo's on my side, Tubbs."

"But study sessions sound fun." Ranboo adds. His voice drops. "I bet they'd be cool with that, too..."

"Ranboo is on *my* side!"

"I'm not really-- on either side--"

He stops himself when he notices something on the other side of the creek.

It looks like a squirrel. But something is telling him otherwise-- it's not the voice that sounds like everyone but also him, it's a different voice. It's his voice, but it's different. It's telling him to do ridiculous things, *run, run, get away from there, get away from that THING--*

But it's just a squirrel. It's got darker fur than any other squirrel he's ever seen, and the more that he looks at it, the more the pit in his stomach grows.

"Ranboo, what are you...?" Tubbo stops in his argument with Tommy over who's side Ranboo was on, noticing that he'd fallen quiet. Tubbo follows where he's looking.

Ranboo has never seen Tubbo freeze like that. He's never seen him go that *stiff* before.

It's strange. Tubbo is a calm sea to rival Tommy's ferocious summer storm, but he's not calm and stiff. He still laughs with gentle waves and is warm like a clear sunny day, not a cloud in sight. But he goes stiff and *still*, and Ranboo realizes then that something is terribly, terribly *wrong*.

The squirrel hasn't moved yet, either. It sits on the other side of the creek, watching them.

"Ah, shit." Tommy says aloud. Intentionally, or not. He glances over to Tubbo, and then back to Ranboo, and his eyes widen, ever so slightly.

A small breeze kicks up.

"All we need to do is stay calm and walk away slowly."

"From-- from a squirrel?" Ranboo feels his voice crack at that, but he is standing and he is behind Tommy and Tubbo, and they *are* backing away slowly, to the small path they used to get down by the creek. It isn't much of a path, as it is a small bit of the creek that has just dried up over the years, solid mud and dirt and rocks.

"Trust us, Ranboo." Tommy says. His arms are in a defensive position in front of him. Both he and Tubbo are blocking him as best as they can, but it's awkward with their drastic height difference. Tommy was taller, but Ranboo had a few good extra inches on him, and he was much more long-limbed than the blond was.

But the difference is that both Tommy and Tubbo were-- well, for the lack of better description, *strong*. He hadn't seen it much, but he'd witnessed Tubbo grab Tommy up by the waist and carry him around like he weighed nothing, and Tommy had lithe, strong, dancer limbs. He doesn't know *why* these two teenagers are so strong, but they are, and he would have just loved to let it be.

"That thing ain't no squirrel."

The not-squirrel gets up on its hind legs when Tommy says that and hisses. Hisses like a snake, and hisses really loudly, over the sound of small cascading waterfalls in the creek.

RUN RUN RUN RUN, the voice in his head is telling him.

The squirrel isn't a squirrel-- Ranboo doesn't know *what* to call it, but he can't help but freeze and watch the squirrel change like it wasn't a squirrel before. Its limbs swelled and grew with large, bulgy veins, and the head *morphed* into what sort-of resembles a bear. Not a bear that Ranboo has ever seen, but that's what his brain said. Small wisps of inky black stuff float off the *thing* in small clouds, and with the thing bigger, he realizes that it isn't just a dark-colored not-squirrel, it's a different color entirely.

It's black. Pure black, like the void, like the night sky with no stars in it.

"Go, go, go!" Tubbo yells, and grabs Ranboo by the arm before pulling him along behind. Tubbo has a strong grip, and he winces at the pain, but he's dragged along anyway.

"What--" Ranboo tries to complete a coherent thought, but words are tumbling out of his brain. "What-- Tommy?"

He cranes his head to glance behind him as he and Tubbo hit the edge of the small dirt mound. Instead of going up the tree roots they used to get down, Tubbo drags them into the water. The rocks are slippery, but Tommy isn't right behind them, he's a good few feet away, staring at the... The demon?

Is that an accurate word to use? *Demon*? He's heard of them his whole life. But demons were supposed to be in hell, right? Demons weren't creatures that could form easily outside of hell, unless they were possessing something--

The creature roars and charges at Tommy, but he doesn't flinch. Instead, he swings his arms, and *something* hits the water and splashes the creature in its face.

Ranboo has to be hallucinating, he decides. Or dreaming. He's actually having an incredibly strange nightmare, isn't he?

Tommy swings his arms again, and the demon gets hit with invisible *air* and gets flipped on its back. It doesn't flip itself over, instead, in a horrid way, the thing's head and arms just shift so it's standing upright again. The blond takes that as his cue to ditch, too, and he runs so fast it's hard to believe his feet are even touching the ground, and Ranboo can't focus or look more because Tubbo yells, "Ranboo, duck!"

He barely ducks underneath as Tubbo brings him into the sewer. It has a peculiar smell. Ranboo doesn't like the smell.

Tommy's there, too, and the demon isn't too far behind. Another gust-- of air?-- hits the demon with another throw of Tommy's arms.

"Tommy, do you have the things?" Tubbo asks, and Tommy nods, digging into his pockets.

It must look weird, three teenagers huddled in a sewer connected to cast basins, but no one is around to comment on that other than the literal *demon* that is hunting them down.

Out of his pockets Tommy produces a necklace. Maybe a more accurate word would be amulet, Ranboo thinks. There's a flower pendant on one end of it, and it glimmers a pure silver, even in the shadows of the sewer they were huddled under.

It looks like his flower. It looks like an amaryllis.

Tommy doesn't hesitate in swinging the amaryllis amulet into the ground, grabbing Ranboo's arm (Tubbo still has a death-grip on his other one), and stomping on the pendant.

And then everything

goes

w h i t e

--boo? Ranboo, can you hear me?"

His ears are still ringing. Everything is too bright, but he tries to focus on what he *can* focus on, which are a few things.

One. He's not standing anymore. His legs are bent in weird ways like they usually are, and he's sitting in some grass.

Two. His arm hurts. It's a strange feeling, like a cuff too tight around his forearm that's bruised. *The one that Tubbo was holding onto. How strong is he?*

He blinks a few times. His head is craned down. He can kinda see his hands now, and his jeans.

Why is he wearing jeans in summer?

He's cold. He's not cold.

--Didn't have enough time to warn him, the thing was fuckin' on us!"

"It's okay, Tommy." It's not Tubbo's voice. It's... Is it Phil?

Why was Phil here?

He blinks a few more times. His ears are ringing a little less, and the brightness has died down a bit, but everything is still disorienting.

"Can I touch you, Ranboo?" It's Phil's voice. Why is he asking that? What is happening?

Mute, Ranboo nods, and feels two hands touch his shoulders.

Something drains. The ringing slowly stops, and the bright light dies down slowly. As he comes to, he realizes he's in someone's front yard.

The house is unfamiliar. It's a rustic house of sorts, a pleasant shade of light blue. Not like the sky, much paler, with two comfortable stories. A yellow car is parked out front. *That's-- uh, what was his name-- Wilbur's!* His brain recognizes it.

He looks up. Phil is leaning over him, close but not uncomfortably close. He's holding onto Ranboo's shoulders. It's not often that he feels any physical touch from-- well, *anyone*. Sister Anne hugs him, the little kids hug him, but that's the extent of it. Phil pulls his arms away. He has a strange bucket hat on, with his long hair pulled back again.

Tommy and Tubbo are standing nearby, looking nervous.

"What... What happened?"

Tommy and Tubbo exchange a worried glance. Phil sighs, standing up slowly and reaching a hand out to Ranboo to help him up. He takes it, slowly standing.

"A lot." Tommy says, and is immediately elbowed by Tubbo. He gives the other boy an incredulous look. "What? I thought we're supposed to be *gentle* with this shit?"

Phil sighs *again*, pinching the bridge of his nose. "Tommy, can you go find Wilbur? I think he's in the back by the lemon trees."

"Sure thing, Dadza!" Tommy salutes, and grabs Tubbo by the arm, dragging him off.

Ranboo rests his hand on one of his arms and winces. He pulls back and notices there's a red mark around it, right where Tubbo was grabbing really, *really* hard. He rubs it and yea, it's definitely bruised somehow.

Phil turns around to him. His face-- as it usually is, for Ranboo, with everyone-- is a blank slate, but he can tell by the way Phil stands that he looks nervous. Like he's about to tell Ranboo that someone *died*, or that he's an *orphan*, but he's already dealt with that trauma, so what's new there?

"You doin' okay, Ranboo? I know that stuff like that can be really sudden--"

"Stuff like what?" Ranboo asks. His voice is a little raised, and he winces at it, but his nerves are literally about to bounce out of his skull. "The-- the demon? The-- the-- how did I get here? Where am I right now?"

Phil reaches another hand out hesitantly, before resting it on Ranboo's shoulder. The loud, nervous thoughts are a little quieter, now, at least. "Yeah, *that* stuff. But I can answer a few of those questions right off the bat. You're at my house right now."

It isn't what he expected when he imagined Tommy's house. It's definitely further out than he expected, on a large amount of land. He can spot a little orchard in the back of the house, where Tommy and Tubbo had disappeared to. He can't tell what trees they have, but they're all bearing fruit. There's a small garage attached to the house by the yellow car, but the gray car that they all went into the zoo in was right next to it. A few bushes sprout flowers in the front of the house, and there's a decently-sized porch.

The house is bigger than when he first glanced at it-- it looks like it goes further back. The porch wraps around a little bit, too, and there's a little porch on the second floor by large, glass doors.

"N-nice house."

"Thanks." Phil chuckles. "You want to go in? Sit down?"

"Uh, s-sure." He doesn't have much to grab at the moment, but he grabs the end of his shirt. The faded gray polo had definitely seen better days, but he had very limited clothing options when most of it came from hand-me-downs from the families of literal *nuns*.

They go in through the door by the porch. Inside the house, it is homely, and Ranboo can't exactly tell how it is decorated except that it's all warm. The walls are an exposed wood, with very few things on it other than a few family photos. There's a large green couch and a smaller, blue loveseat. The colors on their own would be horrendous, but together they look good.

Everything is mis-matched.

Phil takes him through the living room and to the kitchen. There's a small little window-- Ranboo doesn't know what it's called, he's never been in an actual *house* like this, before, now that he thinks about it-- to the kitchen, which is large. It has an old stove, and he only knows it's old because it's the same type of stove that they have at the orphanage, and everything there is old.

The kitchen table is mis-matched like the living room, with different woods and different chairs.

It feels like people just *brought* things to the home and left it there. It should, by all accounts, look tacky, but it doesn't.

"Sit wherever," Phil says, and he turns to the fridge. "Want a drink? Wilbur made some fresh lemonade this morning, but we also have a lot of sodas and milk."

"Oh. Um, lemonade sounds good." He's had lemonade a few times. When he was younger, a kind person at the church brought them large lemons and they made lemonade and lemon pie with Sister Joan. But that was years ago, and no one really has fresh fruit anymore, except, by the looks of it, Tommy's family.

Phil pours a glass and sets it down on the table, even adding a straw, and Ranboo takes it. The ice makes the lemonade condensate in the warm air immediately.

His hands are still a little cold.

"Where do I begin?" Phil sighs, taking the seat next to Ranboo. He looks *old*-- not in a negative way, Ranboo could never think of it like that. But the way he folds down in a sigh, and looks at Ranboo, even with his prosopagnosia, he could tell that Phil was... No, not old.

Tired.

"What do you know about your parents, Ranboo?" He asks. It's a strange question.

Ranboo feels his ears heat up.

"You don't have to answer it-- I know it's a strange question."

"No, it's just. Um." He needs to find something to look at so he doesn't look at Phil, so he stares at the ice in his lemonade. "I didn't know them."

"Oh, I'm sorry." Phil nervously clears his throat. "Well, that complicates things a bit."

"J-just say it. Please." He doesn't want it beaten around the bush. He doesn't want to dodge it forever-- a part of him tells him to be patient, but he remembers the grotesque demon not-squirrel, he remembers the amaryllis pendant and the bright light, he just wants to know.

"What do you think of magic?"

Magic. It's a small drop in a pool of water, but it.

It makes sense.

Magic doesn't exist. Magic isn't in the Bible. Magic doesn't exist.

It makes too much sense.

Magic doesn't exist.

"I, um. I don't know." He looks back at the melting ice. The lemonade is good, it's not too tart but also not too sweet. "Is that-- is that what all that was? Magic?"

"The basics of it, yeah." Phil glances up, and Ranboo follows his look and turns back to see three people coming in through the other side of the kitchen, through a sliding glass door.

Tommy, Tubbo-- and Wilbur. He's wearing the same red beanie, and he's holding a basket of oranges.

"You won't believe how long it took to find him!" Tommy was saying. He stopped, when he noticed Ranboo and Phil sitting at the kitchen table. "We aren't, eh, interrupting, are we?"

"No, no, you're fine." Phil says. "We've barely started."

"Magic." Ranboo repeats.

It's still hitting him.

It's still suffocating him.

Ranboo was coming from a very touchy place with magic. He was raised religious, and never allowed to read books like *Harry Potter* or *Percy Jackson*, because they promoted *witchcraft* and *paganism*. Things that he was told from a young age were *bad*, evil, corrupt, *sinful*.

He was also told that a majority of it wasn't *real*, but that it could corrupt his young mind with ideas that it was. And it would cause him to sin, and turn away from the Almighty, and damn him forever.

But they're casual about the word. Or, well. There was a casual feeling in the air. It's the life they lived.

Demons. Magic.

It's definitely *a little* suffocating.

"Though, it's a little more specific than that." Phil glances over at Tommy. Wilbur tosses him an orange, and Tommy catches it. Not with his hands, but it's cushioned in the air between them, and Tommy juggles it back up into the air, and then to Tubbo, who catches it. "We call them 'gifts'."

"Gifts?"

"Gifts from the universe, really. Whatever God you follow, or not follow." He shrugs.
"They're just plain *gifts*."

"And they're fuckin' cool as *shit!*" Tommy says. "Tubbo is, like, super strong, I can control wind, and Phil--"

"Not right now, Tommy." Phil says, and with one look, Tommy's mouth closes. He nods. He turns back to Ranboo. "Everyone has gifts, right? Maybe some people are super good at math, or have really great balance, small little gifts."

He can think of a few. Sister Anne has nice hugs. Christian has a really good singing voice. Charlie-- when she was still at the orphanage-- as quiet as she was, knew how to color with crayons really well.

“But for some people, it’s just a little more.” Phil glances back at his family.

Ranboo looks back at the lemonade. The ice has barely melted, but condensation leaks little droplets down the glass like rain.

He’s not thirsty anymore.

He feels... Too full. Even though he’s only had breakfast today, and a snack around lunch before heading out to the park after his studies were done, there’s something in him making him slightly nauseous.

Confusion.

God, what is happening? He sends up. *Is this... Is this real? Am I dreaming?*

“I know it’s a lot to dump on you at once, Ranboo.” Phil breaks through his thoughts. Rambo looks back up, but at the awkward hat he’s wearing, not his face. “We can take our time with it, but do you-- do you have any other questions?”

A beat.

Ranboo’s mouth is dry, but he doesn’t want to drink anymore, and he doesn’t want to ask, but he asks anyway. “And that... demon...?”

“It’s. Yeah, that’s a good word.” He says. “We usually call it a *dreamon*, but demon applies just as well. It’s not a demon in any biblical sense, but more in a magical sense.”

“H-How...?”

“Dreamons form from a specific kind of magic energy gaining the will to live.”

Oh.

Part of this whole ordeal made... Sense, to Ranboo.

He’d never snuck a few pages of other books like *Harry Potter* in the library, because it would be too obvious, and he would get caught, but a few other books he had peered into had different, magical worlds. *Narnia* comes to mind as an example, one series he read all the way through snippets of at the library when he was younger. A different, magical world.

It made sense.

It made *sense*, but the other part of him felt like it was all *bad*. The part of him that says *this is a sin*.

But.

He can’t always listen to that voice, right? It can’t be true, right? *Phil and Tommy and Tubbo and Wilbur are all so nice... Is this really a life of sin? Or is it something... else?*

He was raised in a black-and-white sense of morality. There was *good* and *evil*, God and the Devil, sin and not-sin.

Logically, though, there had to be shades of gray, right?

“I’ll drive you home.” Phil offers up.

It’s been a few hours, back at his house. Ranboo knows that it’s getting close to his curfew at the orphanage, but once the general adrenaline and nerves wore off after the encounter with the dreamon, he was feeling a little bit more relaxed.

And, okay. Even though he was metaphorically and morally torn between everything at the moment, he had to admit, it *was* cool to see actual *magic*.

Tommy’s magic explained a lot. Their first encounter, at the grocery store, he used wind to help glide him safely to the ground. He uses it to move faster, too, but he’s clumsy with it. Tubbo’s magic also explained a lot; he was strong, and durable. It’s why he never got hurt when they first ran into each other that one day at the park, it’s why he can lift Tommy *and* Ranboo up like they weigh nothing.

Wilbur had gone off at some point after the Big Talk, as Ranboo is referring to it as, and the third brother, Techno, was nowhere to be found during the whole thing.

He didn’t question it.

“Oh, um. Okay.” He doesn’t know how to get back to the orphanage from Phil’s house, but part of him thinks that Phil *knows* that.

“You live near the park, yeah? It shouldn’t be too hard for you to direct me back.”

Ranboo nods. He doesn’t do it consciously, but he’s chewed one of his cheeks a little raw, and it tastes a bit metallic. He flinches, and chews on the other cheek instead.

The gray car is just like he remembered it, but this time Ranboo sits up front.

They don’t play any music.

It isn’t dead.

The boys-- they just escaped from him. Using damned magic, of course, but it knows that it was only a temporary escape.

And one of the boys isn’t like the others.

He doesn’t know of the truth of the universe. He doesn’t know anything, really, about the world or about himself. It revels in that joy.

It revels in every bit of that joy, and finds its way back to the orphanage.

It will wait. It will melt into the shadows and watch its prey and wait.

Its hungry.

It will wait and watch its prey and by the time its prey knows it will be too late.

:)

Chapter End Notes

I have a quick question to ask y'all, you don't need to read the rest of the notes but please help me out with this, okay?

I don't want this fic to come off as Totally Attacking Christians. Even though some of it is based on my own experience with religion, and I'd love to explore that with characters, I want to ask if I'm starting to overstep lines/boundaries with this fic? Cause the last thing I'd want to do is do THAT, of course. And I want the story to be enjoyed by everybody without the risk of offending anyone or being really awkward in tone even though a lot of fics are that way. I still think it's a decent part of the story, should I tone it back a bit or should I try and edit the last few chapters so that the religion is more ambiguous (like in Night In The Woods, if any of you have ever seen that game.)

Please let me know in the comments!

anyway onto the regularly scheduled author's note;

I have been so excited to write some of these scenes and I'm happy with how they came out. I wanted to write more for the awkward driving home scene but my brain decided that's where it ends, so. Um. Yeah.

New title though!! "Promised Land" fits a lot more, huh? B)

Kudos to those who have tried to guess abilities. I've been going based off the Origins Mod SMP (whatever it's called lmao) but adding a little bit more of my own spin to it. Tommy can control wind, basically an airbender, so that's how he was able to glide down. Tubbo is super strong and durable, lil' tank. They do have their drawbacks but I'll cover it later.

Two down..... Many more to go? See if y'all can guess Phil's and Wilbur's and Techno's gifts...

More DreamSMP members will be coming, too! We had Niki pop up, and now that Ranboo has officially been exposed to the strange magical side of the world, more WILL be coming.

As will more... fun... other things...

:)

[twitter](#)

I Hate Goodbyes. They Hurt Too Much.

Chapter Notes

content warning:

- death.

i'm sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Unlike what most people seem to assume, dreamons do not eat only human flesh. It is the best sustenance for them, yes, in the way that a hearty steak is good for most humans.

It is not very good in the long-run. Humans may be prey, but humans are also a predator in their own rights. Their stamina and strength are all but equal to dreamons.

They are, for lack of better terms, equal.

So eating human flesh, while it is one of the best things for them to eat, it is not the most sustainable.

But they feast on other things.

Misery.

Suffering.

Magic. Energy.

Magic and misery, misery and magic, although fuel them a little less than the meat of a human body, fuel them enough to get going. Magical energy even moreso; when the human suffers on very little energy, it will cave in on itself. Making it easier to feast on misery.

Making it easier, perhaps, to eat the flesh. If a human is pushed far enough it can implode.

It is joyous to watch such an event, just like watching a star collapse in on itself.

It smells misery, coming from the brick building that the tall boy lives in. There are grand iron bars outside the window that it believes is where the tall boy sleeps at night.

It hears raucous laughter often, when it hides in the shadows of late afternoon. There are many children under this roof. All of them have bits of misery and suffering-- no family,

alone, no family, orphan. Orphanage.

It doesn't know why it spends so much time hunting down prey when there was a feast sitting in front of it like this the entire time! Its stomach growls for misery it smells.

It needs to be a smart hunter. It needs to be smart.

It hides in the shadows and watches.

He tries to remember as much as he can of the past two weeks, but it's hard to when so much happens, especially when he has such a poor memory as he does.

But Ranboo writes it down. It's not the smartest, or the wisest, to write it all down. No younger children come into his rooms, but every now and then a sister will pop their head into his room and make sure it's clean and tidy, or to check on his studies, and make sure he's focused on what he needs to do. He can't write when one of them is in there.

He's.

He's afraid.

He's afraid of what the sisters will do with his journal. It's not a fear he's ever had to deal with-- anxiety about other kids finding it and reading it aloud and laughing, sure. But he's on his own in a single room that locks at night with a chair under the doorknob and a bell tied to a string above it that will certainly wake up at least one of the light-sleeping children in the hall.

He's afraid that they won't let him see his friends again.

But he has to write it down, anyway. For once, he's fervorous in writing down details of his life because for once he doesn't want to forget. He wants to remember so badly.

Tommy showed me the pendant again today. It doesn't get broken. His brother Techno makes it, with help from his dad, and it's made of light?? magic. It works at crossroads. What do crossroads mean?

Tubbo says that his family doesn't have a magic gift like he does. It happens sometimes, if magic is in the family tree, people do not have it and it can go on for years. He never knew he had magic until he met Tommy.

Phil says I can come visit still, even with school starting. He knows I live at the orphanage but he keeps it a secret. I think. I hope so. No one's mentioned it yet to me, which is good. He offers to pick me up at the park, so I don't think he's told anyone. He's nice.

I think that Phil thinks I have magic, but I don't.

He pauses at writing the last line.

Do I? He writes.

They had been talking in hushed corners of the library. Not a day where the entire orphanage went to check out books and be a distraction for the kids so the sisters could get a breath of peace, instead, as one of the study sessions Tubbo suggested.

It's the first week of school for them. Ranboo glances out the window. It's late-summer, but he can smell the changing of seasons in the air. The way the night gets colder, the way the leaves are still green but every now and then a yellow one will fall on their path.

A slow change. Just like it always was, but this year feels much different to Ranboo already.

He taps his pen on his desk, nervously. The only thing lighting up his room is the old desk lamp. The sky is clear tonight, if he turns off the lamp he might be able to see some stars outside.

No, I don't have magic. He scribbles out the previous line and adds it in. He would have noticed something sooner.

But still, he hesitates.

Do I? It's a thought, not written out. He shuts his notebook, drops his pen off in his desk and puts his journal in a new hiding place. It's wedged between his mattress and boxspring. Close enough of a place for him to remember, but also not in the same space he's had it for years.

Sister Anne could read it. Maybe. Ranboo was never sworn to secrecy, but he still feels guilty. He still feels torn, even though it feels like a new world has opened up to him.

Ranboo has already written a few pages on how *torn* he feels. On how it feels like his life is out of balance, all of a sudden. Going to church that Sunday made his skin crawl, even though he did his best to pay attention to the sermon and remember Father Patrick's words. It still made his skin crawl.

Nothing felt right.

He sighs, and glances out his window. The bars are still up.

He still sleepwalks.

Everything will figure itself out one day, right, God? He asks.

He doesn't expect an answer.

Tuesdays are quiet.

Tuesdays are spent with Sister Joan teaching the younger kids, Sister Marie taking care of the little ones, and Sister Anne cleaning the kitchen, the living room, the playroom-- all rooms that need taken care of constantly, more than just the Saturday mornings spent on chores before play time.

Ranboo knows Tuesdays are quiet especially for him, because Sister Joan doesn't give him much to do. He's ahead of what she's tutoring him in, and she's also not *that* qualified to teach older kids. Sure, she has a general basis of things that he needs to know, but at the same time, no one expected someone Ranboo's age to still be at the orphanage.

It's a little experimental. They still are trying to figure out what to do with him. Which is fine. It just means every Tuesday, he has a little less work to do. Over the summer it was the day that he would go to the park, visit his friends.

But it's raining.

The leaves are changing a little more, bit by bit, but the world hasn't completely turned beautiful orange-red-yellow hues yet. There are small little piles of leaves kicked up by the younger kids whenever they go outside, but they don't often stay. Either Lou gets to them first, or the autumnal breeze carries them away.

He needs to move. A part of him is telling him to *move*, so he gets up from his desks and stretches his legs and gets out of the stuffy bedroom he's in for too many long hours hunched over his desk looking at math homework.

Ranboo can hear the murmur of students in the chapel-- they're not the quietest class to teach. He remembers how awful it was for Sister Joan to manage all the kids-- all the way on the second floor. He goes down the stairs anyway, carefully. Any creak could be seen as a distraction, and in a house as old as this, there were many creaks in every step of the floorboard.

The living room is empty. The old, tubed television is still up against the wall like it usually is. If he shuffles his way over there, he could probably feel the static electricity leftover from the news station that Sister Marie had on that morning, of the weather. To see how long this rain would last.

The whole week, apparently.

He feels his hairs stand up just going close to it, but he glances out the window next to it. It's raining, just as the weather predicted.

And that's when he feels *something*. Something pull at his core, something cold, and it fills up his entire being with ice. He feels something, and he hears something in the kitchen fall.

Ranboo doesn't think.

He doesn't think when he pokes his head out of the living room. "Hello?" He asks, his voice shaky, but he doesn't get a response. His heart sinks, and he slides over to the kitchen.

And the world feels like it's going in slow-motion, but everything is also going too quickly.

He's at her side in a minute, trying to help her up. "Si-- Sister Anne?"

She's fallen to the ground. Her eyes are half-lidded, she's still warm, but she isn't responding to him. She's not responding.

“Sister Anne! Sister Anne, are you okay?”

Still no response.

His body is like ice, but his cries are louder as he fumbles for his cellphone to call for help.

Sister Marie hears him scream.

She runs into the kitchen, babies long forgotten, and she gasps at the sight in front of her. Ranboo isn’t sure what he looks like, from a different perspective, but he has 9-1-1 on the phone and he’s trying to get the address to them in calm breaths.

Sister Anne’s head is on his lap, cushioned from the fall. There isn’t any blood. On the outside.

He can’t imagine what’s happening on the inside.

Thankfully, Sister Marie is able to give the responder the address, and stays on the line as Ranboo keeps trying to talk to Sister Anne.

She isn’t responding.

Sister Joan is the one who keeps the children calm as the ambulance comes in.

Sister Agnes hops in the ambulance with a drained look on her face.

It’s the most emotion he’s ever seen on Sister Agnes’ face.

Ranboo gets a ride to the hospital with Sister Marie. The younger children are confused at what’s happening, and Sister Joan is trying to keep them together in a van all on her own. Sister Agnes is already there.

Sister Marie has been crying. Ranboo recognizes the streaks of tears running down her cheeks, because they mirror his, as well.

“She’s not going to make it, is she?” He asks as they hit an intersection.

Sister Marie isn’t the *best* driver. She’s speedy and she’s rather chaotic on the road for a nun, and always pulls the nun card if a police officer pulls her over. And gets away with it.

“She... No.” Sister Marie wipes a tear away, her eyes still locked on the road. “If you hadn’t - if you hadn’t found her when she did, we wouldn’t be able to go say goodbye to her before she goes.”

Ah. Ranboo nods.

His mouth is dry.

It's the worst feeling he's ever had. He's never-- he's never lost someone. He's never had to grieve. When he was left on the orphanage, it's off the assumption that his parents are gone, too, but he's never *mourned* them before. Maybe mourned the possibilities that they could have had, mourned the family that he could have been a part of, but never mourned for their lives. He'd wonder if they would mourn him if they were still alive, but he was left on the doorsteps of an orphanage with nothing but a card with his name on it and a t-shirt too many sizes too big for him, in the middle of a storm in the middle of the night.

They don't mourn for him. They left him.

But he's never lost someone. The younger kids come and go and leave as they do at an orphanage. When he was younger, it felt like losing someone, like losing a friend, but as he got older, he became more, more, more... numb to it all.

He pulls his arms in closer to his chest. He still feels like he's made of ice.

Sister Marie puts the heat on a bit more. The windshield wipers are going at a pace Ranboo can't keep up with, but it's the best thing for his mind to focus on at the moment.

Ranboo decides he doesn't like hospitals when he enters one. They're incredibly bright, sterile places-- which is the point, to be clean to help people who are sick-- but he doesn't like them. Maybe it's all about the context of it, but his stomach churns as Sister Marie walks up to the receptionist desk to find out which way the room is that Sister Agnes and Sister Anne are in, and the chipper response that she gets from the receptionist.

Even though it's obvious what they're-- *who* they're there for. It isn't a big town, it isn't a big hospital-- it's a miracle that a town this small has its own independent hospital to care for everyone-- and word travels fast in small hospitals.

They get the directions, and Ranboo follows behind Sister Marie, quietly.

"They say she can still hear everything that we say to her, but she won't be able to respond for much... Longer." Sister Marie takes a pained breath as they get to the end of a hallway. "Father Patrick has been here and she's been given her last rites, now all that's left is..."

To say goodbye, goes unsaid.

To say goodbye, goes unsaid as they approach the door. The rooms have small little windows into it, and Ranboo feels a chill down his already-cold spine as he can peer in and see Sister Agnes holding Sister Anne's hand tenderly.

Sister Agnes looks like she's aged at least twenty years-- and she was rather old and wrinkled to begin with, seeing her juxtaposed with the peaceful form of the younger nun next to her made his stomach churn again.

He knows it's empty. He's lucky that it was only Sister Marie who saw him throw up in the kitchen sink. But it churns anyway.

Sister Marie lets out a shuddered breath, before opening the door. The sound alerts Sister Agnes, who looks up with bloodshot eyes.

“Marie-- and, oh, Ranboo. Hello.”

“How is she, Agnes?” Marie asks, quickly crossing the room to be by the elder nun’s side. She rubs small circles into her back, just like she had done with Ranboo earlier.

Was it hours earlier? Minutes?

Time feels weird. Time feels frozen but also going by too quickly. The sun has set but he doesn’t know the time anymore. He can’t tear his eyes away from Sister Anne.

She’s peaceful. She’s always been the calm, peaceful type, but all the jovial energy she had before is gone, and replaced by something that doesn’t feel real.

Something that doesn’t feel real at all.

He approaches slowly, feeling like an intrusion, but also he can’t look away from one of his caregivers.

“Well, she’s passing on soon, I’m sure.” Sister Agnes responds. “But the doctors say-- she’s not in any pain.”

“A stroke, then?” Sister Marie says.

“Yes. Sudden. None of us would have ever expected it.” Sister Agnes looks up at Ranboo, and waves him over. He crosses the room slowly and quietly, and stands next to her as Sister Marie moves out of the way.

She rests a hand on his arm-- the same one that Tubbo had grabbed, all those weeks ago. It’s still a little sore, but her touch is gentler, at least. “If it wasn’t for you finding her, Ranboo... Well, I’m sure you’ve already been told.”

He nods. He doesn’t want to talk. Sister Agnes nods back, and stands up. Even at her full height, she barely comes up to his chest.

“Do you want a moment alone with her, Ranboo?” She asks.

“S-Sure.” He didn’t. He didn’t want to be alone and face this.

But he didn’t want to be left alone on the steps of an orphanage, so he doesn’t have much say of what happens to him in his life, does he?

Sister Marie nods at this, and grabs the older nun’s hand as they step out of the room for a minute, shutting the door behind him with a click.

Ranboo sits in the chair, and looks at Sister Anne.

She’s peaceful. She looks like she’s sleeping. But he knows she isn’t.

What was the last thing he said to her that morning? *Thank you for breakfast*, for the pancakes she'd tenderly made for the entire household. She looked fine at the time.

He never could have expected that this is how his day would have gone.

He shakily reaches out and touches her hand. There's a bit of movement there-- a bit of a grip back-- but not much, and it faded as soon as he felt it.

What should he say? What was the last thing he should say to one of the women who helped raise him as she's dying and there's nothing anybody could do?

"T-thank you," he manages out. His voice cracks on every syllable, but he forces it out anyway, as loud as it can go, "for everything. Even-- even though you were helping more often with the younger kids, you still had time for me. I-- I won't forget that. I won't forget *you*."

And he won't, he thinks with a shuddering gasp.

He squeezes her hand again. It's colder than when he found her, he realizes. He says a prayer-- *the Lord's prayer*-- under his shaky, shaky breath, before letting go of her hand to wipe away the tears that are burning his cheeks.

Sister Agnes takes that as her moment to walk in, flanked by Sister Marie.

She's holding something.

As Sister Marie takes Ranboo's seat, to say her final goodbye, before she has to go to the lobby to deal with Sister Joan and the children that are bound to be arriving soon, Sister Agnes pulls him out of the room by the sleeve.

She extends her hand out and drops something into Ranboo's hands.

It's a chain-- a golden chain. Ranboo recognizes it as the golden cross he's seen Sister Anne wear every day.

"She wasn't able to say much when we got here, but." Sister Agnes takes a breath. "She wanted you to have her cross. That's the last thing she was able to get out."

"Oh."

"It's going to be hard, Ranboo. I'm sorry." Sister Agnes turns to the door again. They can see Marie praying over Sister Anne. "It won't get easier."

"I know." He says, rubbing his finger gently over the golden cross. It's engraved with little wood details. It feels weird.

"But you're strong, Ranboo." Sister Agnes says. "Even if you don't think you are, you're incredibly strong and brave. And a good kid." She smiles at him, squeezes his arm again.

He doesn't feel incredibly strong and brave and good. He feels-- he feels numb and empty and weak and like he's going to buckle under it all any second. But he nods, takes the compliment, and watches as Sister Marie gets up from her prayer and walks back out.

It's a bit of a struggle to get the clasp together, but he puts on the golden cross in the second-floor bathroom of the hospital. He only dropped it twice to get it around his neck.

It rests comfortably between his collarbones underneath his polo.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for the feedback from the last chapter! I feel a little bit better knowing that I'm balancing things well-- and this isn't a 100% hit-piece on Christianity or religion in general. I'm portraying a bit of an extreme side of it, but "It Gets Better", as the tags say. Eventually.

Also you guys got like 50 comments in one day what the HECK--

The idea for this chapter came to me at 2am the other night with a bunch of other ideas. I had the thought and went "oh, that'll break people", wrote it down, went back to sleep. When I woke up again, I read the note and went "yeah, this is it."

So, um. Yeah.

ANYWAY, DID YOU GUYS SEE PERSERVERANCE ON MARS?? THAT WAS SO COOL!! I LOVE SPACE SO MUCH, HAHAHA. I HOPE YOU GUYS HAVE A NICE DAY/NIGHT AND I'LL SEE YOU NEXT CHAPTER :)

[twitter](#)

The FUN in FUNERAL Really Doesn't Have A Right To Exist Like That, In My Opinion

Chapter Notes

content warning:

- death mentions/funeral
- mentions of child abuse

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Funerals shouldn't start with the word "fun", Ranboo thinks, to distract himself from the reception.

Sister Anne-- *Anne* -- she didn't have much of a family, he learns. There was a brother, and a small family, but none of them were strictly religious anymore. But her brother still came, and with him came his wife, and with his wife came no children, no *grand* children, because the children never really got to know their aunt.

Which is sad.

But very relatable.

Which is also very *sad*, but he doesn't think about that.

His suit and tie are a bit messed up. It's just his Sunday clothes and his usual tie, but he's holding his jacket because the day was particularly humid and sunny out, summer's last attack before hibernating for the next year. His tie is crooked, misshapen, awful, but Sister Anne would always be the one to help fix his ties.

Which. She couldn't fix his tie anymore.

He's away from everyone else. The younger kids were grouped together awkwardly, at the small table of snacks that Father Patrick and the rest of the church workers were able to provide for them afterwards, small little crackers and cheese and meats and a bowl of fruit punch. No one has yet to spill any fruit punch on their best clothes, which he's counting as Sister Anne watching them from up in heaven and as a *miracle*. The other nuns are talking to Sister Anne's brother, more about... Well, what they would do with her.

When he overheard that conversation, Ranboo decided to *nope* out of there immediately, and he's leaning against the wall outside as the sun burns rather brightly on a Thursday early afternoon.

He's left alone to his thoughts.

He realizes that he'd rather not forget the funeral itself. It was the most peaceful thing he's ever been to, from seeing Sister Anne lying peacefully in the coffin to the eulogy that her brother had given in tears full of regret.

He doesn't remember the words very well. *I only wish that I hadn't pulled away from her, and that my children and grandchildren had gotten to know how beautiful of a soul he was.*

No one else was there. No former children who had been adopted out had come-- or, maybe, they hadn't been notified in the first place. He had expected a few of them to show, but with the sudden flip of attitude on the side of all the Sisters, Ranboo...

... He didn't know what to expect anymore.

He glances down at his small glass. It's plastic, more or less, but it's clear, and he took some fruit punch from the bowl before anyone could make a mess, yet he hasn't taken a sip of it at all.

Even in the heat of the sun, he still feels cold and numb.

It had happened suddenly-- he had to help out as much as he could the day before, as Sister Agnes and Sister Marie had to work out funeral arrangements with the church and how Sister Anne's life would be honored, and remembered, which left just one nun to take care of eleven children (including him), so he got put on babysitting duty.

It was like the summer, where he would be told to watch the kids when they played in the plastic kiddie pool in the backyard, but it was much colder. No one did anything, they only took the kids to the basement and put on the same, old, animated VHS church films that he's seen plenty of times over and could probably recite from heart, along with a few toys and a few books.

Locking the children up while the adults dealt with adult things-- not the best strategy, but Ranboo supposes, no one can think straight enough to think through these things. Least of all the adults.

Some of the kids understood-- sort-of-- what was happening. They had barely been able to see Sister Anne in her last moments before the doctors had to come in and finally let her go. The kids had been ushered out, some without being able to even say goodbye.

Ranboo is very thankful that Sister Marie allowed him to ride with her, or he might never have been able to say his own goodbye.

The golden cross is still around his neck. He hasn't taken it off since Tuesday night. He's gotten into the habit of playing with the chain when he's nervous or anxious, but he can't

reach it under his buttoned-up shirt.

If he focuses on it, he can feel it.

He runs a shaky hand through his hair, wincing at how cold his hands are. Despite the heat. The icy feeling that sunk into him hasn't disappeared yet, even though everything, for him, is technically done.

He doesn't know if he'll never *not* be cold again.

Even if Ranboo's body feels warm, like it does, standing out in the sunlight like he is, he still feels cold.

He wonders when it will get easier.

The misery gets even more delectable.

It hadn't attacked, it hadn't gotten too close to any human in the house except for the tall boy, whose room it first hid in, but one of the older humans had died of natural causes.

It could've gotten a good bite or two in, too, if the tall boy hadn't stumbled in. Shame, shame, but it does not mind.

The misery that comes after is even more delicious than anything fresh it's ever had.

It considers, for a second, saving the misery, bringing it back to the den, but its gluttony wins over.

It watches the children play with less energy than they've had before. It listens to the sounds that come out of the tall boy's strange device attached to his ears that are loud enough for it to hear, and wonders what he listens to.

Children are easy prey, but they're in too many numbers. The tall boy knows of its existence, even if he doesn't know it is there, in the shadows of his room.

But the adults?

The adults are f a i r g a m e.

It waits in the shadows of the hall, after the tall boy is locked in his room at night. The adult woman who walks away, stuffing the key in a pocket on her dress, doesn't notice it.

No one can notice Dreamons that well when they're hunting.

It watches the adult and feels the misery reeking off of it and it doesn't hesitate. Its stomach growls too loud, it wants more, more, more more more more more more

It pounces.

Everyone doesn't like how Sister Agnes is suddenly more involved in, well.

Everything.

She once existed as a measly head. One you would not see unless you really got in trouble, and then it was a ruler, or something much worse, coming your way. She didn't get involved in the raising of children much at all. She ran paperwork, she met with the parents, she did the finances and took care of budgeting and everything else so that the other nuns could focus on raising and teaching the children.

She didn't feel real sometimes, but she would appear every now and then, to get dinner to take to her office, or on Sundays when they went to church, or any holiday that they celebrated.

She was there, but she wasn't *there* -there.

And then she was.

It makes sense that she would have to get more involved. A lot of roles shifted around. Sister Joan, who focused on teaching the children, balanced making meals more often, taking over Sister Marie's job. Sister Marie cared for the youngest, Helena, who was beginning to learn how to walk and talk already.

Sister Agnes took care of the rest. She would help clean, she would help Joan make dinner so it wasn't awful, burnt meatloaf every night, and more importantly, she dealt with all the discipline that Joan and Anne would once balance.

Which was the *bad* part.

Ranboo wonders, as the lock to his door clicks and he hears the chair get pushed up against his door, what had happened to her in her lifetime that made her such a way. She was strict, she expected all his work to be completely done and correct before he made his way anywhere in the house, and even wanted to start assigning him *more* work.

Idle hands are the devil's workshop, echoes through his mind. It makes sense why he's getting more work assigned, since he had been getting through most of his work because there was nothing else to do in the *damn* orphanage--

Oh.

Ranboo catches his thought.

He'd never thought of the orphanage like *that* before. He was a little annoyed, sometimes, but Sister Anne was always there to help him channel negative thoughts into more constructive ones.

She was his rock. She was everyone's rock-- not just his, he can't claim Sister Anne as his own. Everyone went to Sister Anne when they had a problem. She was the mediator, the level ground, the one that even the other sisters would turn to when something had gone awry. She was everyone's rock, and now the entire tower that had been built up was shaking and about to tumble down.

He writes that down in his journal, fiddling with her necklace. It's his necklace, now, technically, since she had mumbled it to Sister Agnes in one of her dying breaths.

He wonders what exactly she said as her last words.

Sister Agnes forgets, sometimes.

Everyone is human and everyone forgets, he understands that. He's trying to understand that.

But sometimes it would be nice to wake up in the morning and not have to knock on his door or the wall to be let out of his room.

He tells Tommy and Tubbo a half-truth, a half-lie. An omission.

He feels awful saying it.

RANBOO: Sorry if I go silent for a little bit. Something big happened and I don't know when I can leave again.

They sent lovely responses. Or, well, Tubbo did. Tommy just said *get well, bitch*, just as Tommy does, but it was still meaningful to him.

Their library study sessions would have to be put on hold, so soon into the school year. Maybe he'd get lucky and they'd let him go out after a little bit.

They can't go back to the old normal.

That's impossible.

Maybe, we just need to make a new normal, Ranboo thinks, setting his phone down as music plays into his headphones.

He doesn't like the new normal.

Ranboo really, really, *really* does not like the new normal.

It's quieter. The hushed laughter he would hear at night from other rooms is all but silent, only replaced by playing the music off his phone that's gotten stale and dull. He can only listen to *My Lighthouse* only so many times before the entire song sounds stale like... Like a stale piece of bread.

But he's not going to try and download any more music. Not when... Well.

Sister Agnes exists.

She's gotten worse.

Ranboo hurts, still, from the grief of Sister Anne's death. From finding her, from the gift that hangs limply around his neck, from the icy cold that's spread through his limbs, to the numb, empty thoughts he has when he's not focusing on schoolwork.

Hurt drives pain in people.

And sometimes, he thinks, pain makes people hurt other people.

Which is what Sister Agnes is starting to do.

He hadn't noticed it much, at first. Sometimes she would be a little too strict in punishment. Cleaning the bathroom, from top to bottom, scrubbing every inch of it until she's happy and the kids hands go raw. Rulers upgraded to small rods on the hands of anyone misbehaving. Knuckles would be turned pink and red and *bruise* a little bit, if a kid spoke a little too loud or got into a fight with another or spilled something and made a mess.

Even if some of them were accidental.

Ranboo knew that she used rulers to keep the kids in line-- the phantom stings on his own knuckles showed that, too-- but it was escalating.

Forgetting to unlock his door more often was *also* a thing that he wasn't enjoying very much.

He would get up and stretch his legs and wonder what predicament he got into the night before, asleep with half of his body in one of his dressers or hanging off his bed or leaned up next to the door, the doorknob in hand (that one scared him), and when he woke up, he was used to the door being unlocked.

Sometimes Sister Marie would remember and rush up and unlock the door for Ranboo before breakfast.

But when it happened it was usually in the middle of breakfast, or if one of the younger kids heard Ranboo knocking on the door to get out, and they would go get someone.

He didn't like that.

He snuck a few snacks-- snacks that weren't to be touched during snack-time, he knew, but he did it anyway-- to keep in the dresser of his night table.

In case he's forgotten about again. It's pathetic, he thinks, his legs curled up on his bed when he wakes up at five in the morning one day and can't fall back asleep. It's pathetic that the one with memory problems is forgotten about.

RANBOO: I should be good this Thursday for studying!

TUBBO: yayyyy that's great!!

TOMMY: finally!!!1!1!

TOMMY: math has sucked w/o ur help

RANBOO: Well, glad that I'm useful, then =)

TOMMY: who tf types emojis like that

TUBBO: let him be, toms.

TOMMY: no

TUBBO: i s2g tommy--

TOMMY: also if its cool w ur folks Phil said u could come for dinner

TOMMY: ranboo

TUBBO: yeah!! taco THURSDAY!!!

TUBBO: it's usually techno who cooks so it's never bad, dw ranboo haha

TUBBO: ...ranboo?

The icy feeling is spreading through his limbs, and it's not just cold anymore, it's the sort of cold he would imagine feeling on the highest point on Mount Everest. It's colder than he's ever felt before, and his mouth feels dry and his arms are shaking and he can't-- he can't--

-- he can't find his journal.

It was in a constantly changing place. When he first learned about magic (*sin sin sin evil sin*, he thinks to himself but pushes those thoughts away) he had written it down in his journal.

Because he didn't want to forget.

And he wrote about it *all*, because he didn't want to forget about any of it. It was a form of escapism, for him, if he truly thought about it. Something interesting to think about when

normal life got dull and ordinary.

And it was stashed in a constantly changing place because he knew that his caregivers, the nuns, the Sisters, would, for the lack of better terms, *freak out* if they found it and read it.

So Ranboo put it under his pillow one night. The next morning, he'd hide it in his closet. Then his desk drawer, underneath the previous ones. Between his mattress and boxspring. Underneath his underwear in his drawer. Rotating randomly, hoping that he'd actually keep the memory of where it was, and not forget where he put it.

But he can't-- he can't--

He can't find it.

He's torn his room apart, already. It's getting late, but not late enough for his door to be locked and the chair to be moved. It's almost time for dinner, and he was out on a walk for the afternoon. It was a nice Wednesday, the autumn leaves were really starting to change and fall. He didn't meet up with friends, it was a day to leave him to his own thoughts.

It's been two weeks since Sister Anne's funeral. Almost two weeks. Two weeks the next day. It was going to be-- well, hopefully, a better day. He'd just texted that he was down for studying again with Tubbo and Tommy at the library, and he'd even been asked if he could go over to their place for dinner. That was nice.

He was going to ask Sister Marie after dinner about it. She wasn't as intimidating as Joan, or terrifying as Agnes, and she was in a pretty good mood the whole day, so he hoped it would've been safe. Sister Anne would deal with that, but she--

She can't, anymore. So he has to go for the least-intimidating now.

But he couldn't find his journal.

He throws his sheets back up on the bed, not caring about the mess that they're in, and looks through his desk drawer again. The previous journals are stacked up on his desk chair, out of the way, but no matter how many times he looks, he can't find it in the desk drawer.

Ranboo's thoughts are turbulent next to the prayer he keeps sending upward. He's thinking it, he's mumbling it under his lips-- one of the first prayers he was able to memorize, despite his poor memory, because Sister Anne taught it to him one night when he'd lost something that he can't remember and it helped him.

He thinks.

Dear Saint Anthony, please come around, something is lost and can't be found. Please come around, something is lost and can't be found. Something is lost and can't be found.

It isn't on his desk. Even though he keeps praying and hoping it'll materialize before him, and he can just nervously laugh, and pretend nothing happened, and get ready for dinner.

But he can't find it.

Dear Saint Anthony, please I pray, bring it back without delay. Please. Please bring it back. Please. Something is lost and can't be found.

He can't find it.

He hears the echo of *dinner's ready* come from downstairs. The sound of loud footsteps-- running, but not quite, to not upset Sister Agness- passing his door. It's cracked open, and he can see the shadows of the younger kids as their stomachs growl and hunger for their nightly meal.

Ranboo sighs, glancing around his room again. He's torn it apart, and tried to put it back together. Sister Agnes checks rooms on Fridays. It was Wednesday. He would be fine to leave it in disarray, wouldn't he? He would just eat dinner as quickly as he could, clean up as fast as possible, and put it back together before tearing his room apart again.

Maybe Saint Anthony would find it for him and leave it on his bed for when he got back from dinner. Maybe Saint Anthony was just-- teaching him a little patience. Maybe Saint Anthony was looking out for him-- *he'd looked at Saint Anthony for his saint name for his confirmation, which he thought was oddly fitting and ironic. And it's one of the few saints he can remember well, which is also ironic--*

His thoughts are cut off when he turns around.

There, at the door.

Sister Agnes stands.

Holding a green composition notebook.

Chapter End Notes

HOLD ON EVERYONE, WE'RE ABOUT TO BE GOING THROUGH A STORM,
MAKE SURE YOU HAVE AN EXIT BUDDY, BUCKLE YOUR SEATBELTS,
THESE NEXT FEW CHAPTERS ARE GOING TO GET DARK!!!!

Anyway hi. Ranboo raising \$20,000+ for the Trevor Project and breaking twitch records? That's amazing. He's really cool-- what a good kid. :D

Last chapter I really broke you guys, sorry about that, but it was. Um. A necessary evil for character development and plot progression? Yeah. :) But the dreamon had NOTHING to do with her death, it was just one of those sudden things.

I did get a lot of joy in seeing everyone's comments on that chapter. Like, maybe a little sadistic joy, but it makes my heart warm that my writing was able to elicit emotions like that. Even I Got emotional writing that chapter and I normally don't cry at sad stuff in books or anything. I was worried that not being able to write for months was going to

make my writing bad and awful, but I think it's a little good. I can have a little bit of self-confidence in my writing. As a treat.

FOR THIS CHAPTER:

A lot of things are happening that Ranboo doesn't know about yet and I haven't shared with you-- as is the nature of writing from a limited POV with only slight intermissions with this dreamon now, but Ranboo doesn't know a lot of things or what's going on. Nor do Tommy and Tubbo. But they should be back soon!

This is stuff I started putting into plans when the first chapter was published and I realized, well heck, I have an actual story that won't go away and not just a sudden burst of writing inspiration. So I'm excited to see what you guys think of it! No abuse will get physically worse than it's already been mentioned, don't worry. But emotionally? Have a lot of tissues.

ALSO pls remember I don't plan on having this be outright attacky on Christians or Religion. It's a few chapters that show the worst of it, but the tag "It Gets Worse Before It Gets Better" is there. It exists. It's present. It gets better. It always gets better. Trust me <3

Anyway, see you next time :)

Everything Is Still Bad

Chapter Notes

content warning:

- there's a bit of emotional abuse/manipulation, some flashbacks to previous bullying incidents and punishment. nothing graphic.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The clock in the hallway doesn't have a right to tick loudly, Ranboo thinks, staring at Sister Agnes.

Even though he can't recognize her face at all-- he tries to avoid it, by looking at her eyebrows, the mole on her face that stands out the most, the air around her head, back down to the notebook she held-- he stands still, looking at her.

She looks back at him, holding the notebook.

Tick, tock. With his door wide open, the sound of the grandfather clock that he usually tunes out is deafening.

He doesn't know what to say. His mind goes blank for a second.

"You-- you found my journal."

Sister Agnes holds it tightly. She doesn't have a ruler. But Ranboo is still afraid, and feels himself shrink down on himself.

"Yes. Yes, I did." Her grip is iron-tight on the binding of the journal. "Under your pillow, like it always has been."

"Ah." He didn't move it from its spot-- she.

Oh.

Oh, *Sister Agnes took my journal*, echoes through his head. Bounces.

He's cold. His hands are sweaty and shaky. He feels like the world is shrinking around him.

Tick, tock.

"I was curious about these boys you said you had met over the summer, at the park." Sister Agnes starts. She doesn't move. It's more foreboding that she doesn't move, she doesn't feel real, she feels more two-dimensional than ever before. "Sister Anne told me it was fine for you to make friends, and that, from what she heard, they were two good boys."

Ranboo gulps. He knows where it's going *but also he doesn't know what she means* but he knows what's coming.

"I put my trust in her. But I was still, admittedly, curious." She takes a few steps in, her nose crinkles at the pile of sheets up on his bed tangled together, the desk drawer he's opened and tossed out half the contents of on the floor, the dresser drawer hanging open. "It's my duty here to keep all of you children safe and make sure you grow into men and women of God, Ranboo. That's what I swore I would do to the Bishop." She opens his notebook.

His memories flood back. Bad memories. *Young boys whispering and giggling at night. He wakes up slowly, but when he turns his head, they're holding flashlights over a notebook. His journal. Making fun of his writing, his handwriting, how he can't remember anything.*

He yelps in shock, and the other boys gasp loudly, too, and the light flickers out to darkness. It blinds him a bit.

"Give it back!" He cries out, blinking through the darkness of the room.

More laughter. It's thrown, it hits him in the face. Nothing breaks, but it stings.

"It was a very interesting day, one I don't want to forget." Sister Agnes reads his words aloud. Taunting him. "Tommy and Tubbo and I were at the park, when we were attacked by something that wasn't a squirrel like I thought."

He's shaking. His legs feel like jelly. They might give out under him.

They do.

His knees are going to bruise after hitting the floor that hard, but he's not really in control of his body. His anxiety is. His nerves are. Everything else feels like it's shutting down.

"They were able to get us away, to Tommy's house. Phil was there. He explained everything to me. Magic exists, apparently. And the thing that attacked us was called a *dream on*." She pronounces the last word funny, definitely on purpose, in a mocking tone.

It's his first and only time in trouble with Sister Agnes. She's been called for other troublesome kids, but never Ranboo.

He didn't want to be on the bad side of the ruler.

But he's young, and he doesn't have that much of a filter yet. So when a group of boys start pulling a girl's hair (he can't remember names or faces he just knows that this girl is the only blonde they have and that Sister Joan ties her left hand down so she has to write with her write hand) he yells, "Stop it!"

Very loudly.

The boys-- the same boys who make fun of him and take his journal and laugh at how he can't recognize any of them or remember their names-- turn to him slowly.

It's also the first and only time he's ever been in a fight with anyone else, and he loses it before any of them even get a hit in.

Sister Agnes is called in and holds her ruler out, and everyone involved in the fight except for the girl is reprimanded.

His knuckles still sting, and he rubs them anxiously.

“Ranboo.” He looks up. He can’t look at her eyes, so he looks up. Maybe at God, for forgiveness. He feels like he’s caught in a sin-- which he is.

Is he?

He is.

He should’ve stopped talking to Tommy and Tubbo after the incident. He shouldn’t have written about it to remember. Shouldn’t have bothered to remember. Should’ve let the memory pass on by like a majority of his days.

He knows it wouldn’t have, even if he didn’t write it down. Some big things don’t need to be written down for Ranboo to remember.

“I am sure you understand why I’m upset with you.” She closes his notebook. Doesn’t give it back. Holds it under her arm. “We trusted you, with going on these walks, but I don’t think you’re ready enough to go out and deal with a world full of *sin* like this. You’ve let these people corrupt your brain, and you’ve only known them a few months.”

“M sorry.” He mumbles out.

“I am not the one to apologize to. Only the Lord can accept your apology.” Sister Agnes sighs. “Get up.”

He doesn’t.

“Ranboo, get up. Don’t make this worse for yourself.”

He slowly gets off his knees. They’re still a little stiff, will definitely hurt tomorrow, and he brushes off the bit of dirt that he must’ve brought in on his walk and left on the hardwood floors.

“Come with me.”

He follows Sister Agnes. His thoughts are empty, he doesn’t think of anything else except how *horrible* he is. *She’s right, she’s right, it’s bad, I should’ve dropped them after that incident, I should’ve--*

-- *Should you?* A voice in his head says. It sounds like his, but it doesn't feel like his. *Should you have? The first and only friends you have ever made, not a part of your world? Not a part of this small, small slice of your life at the moment?*

No, he thinks. *No, I should've never spoken to them after the first time my phone got taken away*, he thinks. They go down the stairs. He can hear laughter and talking from the dining table. People are already eating.

He doesn't feel hungry. Even his stomach is full of ice.

Sister Agnes leads him through the kitchen, through to the backyard.

There's a small fire pit. Lou stands by it, looking sheepish, but doing as he's told. A small fire is lit up.

Oh. Oh, this isn't good.

Sister Agnes hands Ranboo the book. "I'm sure you've pieced together what you need to do, right? Ranboo, you're incredibly smart, and I'm sure the Lord will forgive you when you ask. But you also need to learn that actions..." She glances over to the small fire. "... have consequences."

Ranboo nods.

"Please, talk. I don't want you to be mute now, too."

"Yes ma'am." He says.

He grips onto the notebook. What had he written in there? *The dreamon encounter. Pages of books he was sneaking through at the library when studying with Tommy and Tubbo.*

Sister Anne.

He didn't want to forget Sister Anne.

He didn't-- he didn't want to forget her. She would exist in memories of old journals, but he didn't want to forget Sister Anne or, heck, he didn't even want to forget her death because he was *there* for her and there to help, and she gave him her cross necklace, and she--

He didn't want to forget anything.

"Well?" Sister Agnes says.

"I-- I don't want to forget a-anything." He mumbles out, pulls the journal a little closer. Molten tears streak down his cheeks.

"Oh, Ranboo." Sister Agnes approaches. Gives him an awkward side-hug. "What are you scared of forgetting?" She looks back at the fire. "The sins you've committed? The mistakes you've made? The Lord will allow you to keep the memories, I'm sure."

Ranboo doesn't think so. He thinks-- well, he thinks the memory issue is something that isn't related to God at all. He thinks it's like his sleepwalking and face blindness. Just something about him that he was born with, or something that's an issue that should be addressed but isn't being addressed.

"I don't want anything else to catch fire, Ranboo." She grabs on the journal in his possession and pulls. Harder than he would expect, but he's also pretty weak, and very out of everything at the moment. "I will personally drive you to confession tomorrow morning. This can be resolved very easily."

Sister Agnes throws the journal into the flames.

He yelps out, in surprise, but it's drowned out by the tears that are rolling down his face and the awkward shuffle Lou does to get the house to contain the fire and Sister Agnes looking at him, daring him to make any more noise.

He bites down hard on his lip, and turns around and goes back into the house. He notices the younger kids had piled up at the bay window in the kitchen to watch, but doesn't acknowledge anything.

He goes up to his bedroom. He shuts the door behind him.

Doesn't wait for the lock.

Falls on top of the knotted bedsheets.

Buries his face into the pillow.

And sobs. Quietly. Silently.

It's a good skill to have, unfortunately.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with ye.

He tightens his grip on his hands. He has the wooden rosary, again. His penance is rather simple, he thinks, for what sins he's done--

But did you really sin? He asks himself, in the back of his head. *Did you really sin? Or were you just... existing?*

What would Sister Anne think?

Ah. He lost track of his place, again. He flinches at it, and tries to remember where he left out.

The church is empty. There's only the light of the sun coming through, an echo of footsteps on old wood behind him from Father Patrick leaving after praying some himself. Sister Agnes has left him at the church for the next few hours.

So he's alone with his penance, his thoughts, and God.

What would Sister Anne think? He wonders, focus on the prayer long gone. His poor memory, probably. She would probably be angry. Angry? She's never been angry. But I think she would've been angry to see that.

The other nuns didn't say anything that morning. At least Sister Agnes remembered to unlock the door. He grabbed a bowl of cereal and an orange, quietly, before the other younger kids woke up, and slipped out of the house with the eldest nun before anyone noticed.

Seven in the morning. His mind is still a little foggy, from a lot of things. Lack of sleep.

He woke up twice, mid-sleepwalk. Once at the window, in the middle of opening it (the cold, harsh breeze woke him up), second time at the door, trying to pull on the doorknob to open it.

From the night before.

The notebook had been burned to ashes. He had seen it in the trash can in the kitchen, getting rid of his orange peel. There was a bit of a page left, crumpled up.

No one watched when he pulled it out and unraveled it.

It only had his scribbles. ...*magic*.

He shoved it in his pocket and deposited the orange peel. It feels like it's burning through the pocket of his jeans in the church like this.

From, well.

Stress, probably. Stress of everything fogging up his mind.

Oh, right. Hail Mary, full of grace...

His mind trails off again, almost immediately.

Why? He shakes his head, trying to stop any tears from leaking out. It's not too successful. *Why did this have to happen? Why did she have to take my journal? Why did she have to burn it?*

Why do I have to say goodbye to my friends?

He doesn't get a chance to say goodbye to his friends. He still had his phone, but Sister Agnes blocked their numbers. He doesn't want to get in more trouble if he tries to unblock them, but he sometimes feels small, phantom vibrations in his pocket, as if he's received a message.

Why do I ruin everything I touch?

He sniffles again, stops praying to wipe the tears away. He feels incredibly, incredibly alone.

It's then he realizes that, without his friends, he has no one left. Not a single soul. The sisters will provide for him, give him food and a shelter, but he doesn't have a single friend. No one to confide in. No one to laugh with.

He's so... He's so alone.

Another wave of grief mixed with sadness mixed with anger threatens to overwhelm him, so he clasps his hands together over the rosary again.

Hail Mary full of grace the Lord is with you--

A nudge on his shoulder. He looks up.

A random man is awkwardly holding a box of tissues to him.

"T-Thanks." It's barely a whisper.

The man is probably as old as the sisters, with awful balding and an even stranger beard that falls down his chest. It's pure white and sort-of curly. He's wearing a flannel with a vest, and by all accounts, looks like he just got back from *hunting* somewhere.

"No problem, kid." He has a southern accent. He takes a seat next to him in the pews-- not too close, but he does sit down. At least he respects personal boundaries. "Dunno what a kid as young as you is doin' in this place, but at least have some tissues if you're gonna be sobbin', eh?" He chuckles.

Ranboo nods. He sits back up in the pew and takes a tissue to wipe the tears off his cheeks with.

"I, um. I did some bad things. I think." He isn't even sure they're bad things. He isn't sure of much anymore.

"Ya think?" The man repeats, but not in an accusatory way. It's a curious way. "Unless you confessed a murder or robbery to Father Patrick, ain't nothing in the world worth crying over like that."

Well, no. He didn't murder or rob anyone. That's a start, at least.

"Plus, you're a kid. You're young, bound to make mistakes." The man leans back in the pew. "Ain't nothing to stress about. God forgives everything, always. Even if you feel unforgivable. Even if you feel like a straight-up scum of the earth."

"Why?"

"Why does God forgive?" The man shrugs. "Dunno. It's just who He is. Don't have the time to be wonderin' about that stuff." He looks around at the church.

"Oh." What a simple way to think about it. Not worrying about all that stuff. Just accepting as it is. Ranboo thinks it would be nice to be able to think like that, but he has essays to write about saints now. *Many more essays to write and books to read. And he's all alone--*

He grabs another few tissues. Just in case.

“Shouldn’t you be in school right now?”

“I don’t-- I’m homeschooled.” Ranboo replies. He does have so much work to get back to, and now he has to do it all alone--

“Ah, homeschoolin’ might produce good saints, but they hardly ever produce good people. In my opinion.” The man looks back at Ranboo-- not at his eyes, this time. “You feel like a good person right now?”

He slowly shakes his head. *Okay, I think he might be a little... Loose in the head.*

“I mean, I did just, um. Confess my sins.” He’s trying to focus on the penance, but he can’t focus his thoughts, and now this random man is talking to him and it’s starting to sound like nonsense. Did he pass out in the middle of prayer and he’s having just a really weird dream right now?

“That should be making your soul lighter, not heavier.” He snaps his fingers, and stands up. “You tell whoever brought you here that you finished your penance, and get going, Ranboo.”

“But I didn’t-- wait, how did you--”

He blinks.

The man is gone.

What. Ranboo blinks again, stands up, and looks around. No one else is in the sanctuary with him. He’s all alone, still.

His pockets still have tissues in them, but he doesn’t want to touch them at all. So he awkwardly ducks out of the church and calls Sister Agnes to pick him up.

Misery is good, it decides, holding onto the nun.

It wonders why its brethren don’t do this more often. Latch onto a miserable person. It feels like infinite energy, just like-- just like its King.

It feels so powerful. It can’t compel the nun to do anything of its own volition, but the little, bad thoughts that she has in the back of her head are amplified. If she acts on them, she acts on them, it doesn’t care.

It creates more misery with all the children. Especially the tall boy.

But it likes the misery from the nun. Too much.

It feels its power grow.

Maybe its brethren will start calling it Prince.

It's a middle-of-the-night idea. Ranboo has a few of these, sometimes. Not all of them are particularly big, or interesting.

Most of the time it's a suggestion for dinner. Or breakfast, the next day. *Maybe even breakfast for dinner*; a novel idea that used to make Sister Anne dance on her toes with excitement.

Other times it's a line that comes to him. A random line, a random thought. Silly things. He scribbles it in the back of his notebook. He's taken a few loose pages from the printer in the office to write stuff down on and shove into the back of an older journal so he remembers something-- especially that weird encounter with the man.

Seriously, what was *up* with that?

But this is bigger than any of the other middle-of-the-night ideas. He's still awake, despite the beautiful analog clock hauntingly telling him it's 12:03 AM and he hasn't been able to sleep a wink yet because his head is incredibly full of thoughts. He also doesn't want to sleep, because he doesn't want to wake up in another unfortunate place.

He sits up in his bed. The room is dark, only lit by a little sliver of moonlight, but he carefully slips out of his bed and makes his way to the desk.

He can't text Tommy or Tubbo anymore. He can't see them anymore. Their numbers are blocked, Sister Agnes takes his phone every night so he can't unblock them and talk to them at night (he needs the phone for communication with the nuns, still, a lesson they all learned when he was grounded that first time), but he *can* do something else.

He carefully tears a few pieces of paper from one of his spiral school notebooks. The paper seems better for letter-writing.

Write them letters. I don't know how to get them to them, but...

He glances at the clock. 12:03 AM.

Thursday.

The day they all agreed to get together to study again. The day he was supposed to go to Tommy's house and have tacos for dinner and spend time with *friends*.

They were probably upset. He had seen the text messages that he'd gotten when he got his phone back from Sister Anne, and they were very upsetting. They would hopefully assume he was grounded again, something he can't control, something he can't communicate with them-

-
He's so alone--

But.

He can hope-- he can pray, to God, to all the saints, to Jesus, to Sister Anne, to everyone and everything in the universe-- that he's lucky enough to catch them tomorrow. At the library.

Give them a letter.

Hope that this suffices as a good enough goodbye.

Tubbo & Tommy--

If you're reading this letter that means I was successful at something for the first time in a good few weeks. Thank God! It's been rough. I don't want to go too detailed with this, I want to keep this under a page, and I have a few things I want to confess to you two. You deserve to know.

First, I'm an orphan. I don't have a family-- I'm at the orphanage by the park and the church. The religious one. I'm the oldest one here and with all my health problems-- sleep walking, memory problems, face blindness-- it makes sense that no one wants to adopt me, I've accepted I'll age out before then. I didn't want to tell you earlier because I was embarrassed by it. I thought you'd see me as lesser. I know differently, now.

Second, I'm not allowed to speak to you two anymore. I write everything down in journals that's important to remember. One of the nuns-- my caregivers-- found it and burned it and blocked your numbers on my phone. They take my phone at night and look through it, so I can't contact you anymore.

I'm sorry.

Thank you both for being good friends. You're the first friends I've ever had, and probably will have for a while. Thank you for being great friends, thank you for showing me your world. My notebook was burned but I haven't forgot you yet-- and I hope I never will.

Yours truly,

Ranboo.

Chapter End Notes

B) Early chapter POG?? Me publishing it not between the hours of 12-3am so I get decent sleep before class pog?? I had this chapter written along with the last (part of it is cut from the previous chapter, actually, I didn't originally plan on that giant cliffhanger but hey things happen) but I don't like publishing more than one chapter at once. But I feel a little merciful after the last chapter, and I'm taking melatonin gummies around eleven and trying to fix my awful sleep schedule, so hope y'all enjoy an early chapter :)

Onto the chapter comments I always do;

MORE dreamon lore??? A random man giving Ranboo tissues?? Oh and the whole literal fire that he had to deal with. Um. He's kinda going through a lot right now, but hopefully?? It'll get better??

At least he has a lot of Christian pop music to listen to. That won't drive him insane one bit :)

TBH I had no idea what I was doing with the church scene, it wrote itself. Who is the man? Is he some kind of angel? God Himself? Jesus? Who knows! I don't, and I'm the writer. Take that as you will.

Also, Ranboo is a smart kid. Hope his plan goes well.

See you next chapter!

(EDIT 2/4/2022: the old man is now canonically boberto /j)

INTERLUDE I

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tubbo isn't quite sure why Ranboo hasn't responded.

He's grounded, again, Tubbo assumes. The first time had been sudden and random-- as it seemed to be with his parents. Tubbo was ready to fight Ranboo's parents, at this point. He doesn't talk much about his home or his life, and if that's because his parents aren't nice, Tubbo is ready to square up.

Tommy will have to be the one to pull him away. And that's saying something.

Still, silence from Ranboo was confusing and strange. They were supposed to meet up at the library today and he hasn't heard anything from Ranboo, anything about studying or anything about Taco Thursday.

And Techno makes amazing tacos. He'd hate for Ranboo to miss it.

Maybe we can sneak him tacos, if he's grounded again, he thinks throughout school. He and Tommy don't share a lot of classes-- unfortunately-- but when they have lunch, he takes his seat right next to Tommy and pitches the idea.

"That sounds like a terrible idea, Tubbo." Tommy says.

"You didn't say no!"

"You know I'm always in, bitch!" Tommy laughs, as a few more of their friends make their way to the table. They're friends, they're a big group, and Tubbo knows them all and loves them all, but he and Tommy?

They were tight.

Being united by magical forces will definitely strengthen a friendship. They can't talk about it there, so when they meet up when school lets out, they can in hushed voices as they walk.

It's a breezy autumn afternoon. Not chilly enough to start bringing out coats and jackets, but Tommy does have a cozy, hand-knit scarf on and Tubbo pulls a beanie over his ears and they're both in long-sleeves. Enough to stay comfortable, but not too warm in the furnace that is their stupid highschool.

A thought comes to his mind.

"Do you think Ranboo has magic?"

Tommy spits out the water he was sipping. Tubbo really needs to get more aware of his surroundings when he says stuff, sometimes.

“W-What? Where did this come from?” He manages to choke out, wiping the water off his face with his hands.

“I mean. I haven’t met anyone without magic getting introduced to magic, you know, because no one else has magic in my family except for me, so I don’t usually know how it goes, but Ranboo has been taking it... Really well?” He tries to explain. Tommy usually picks up on it, and the blond nods along. “... That’s a thing, right? Didn’t Phil say something about magic brings people with gifts together like fate?”

“Phil says a lot of things.” Tommy’s never thought high of his dad, if any indication of calling him by his first name says anything. He still jumps over the cracks in the pavement as they walk, though. He remembers Phil’s favorite food and favorite flower. “Maybe? I don’t know.”

“We should ask him tonight at dinner!” Tubbo says. “Whether or not Ranboo is there.”

“I told Phil to plan on hm not comin’, but Techno always makes so much food for Taco Thursdays that he can squeeze in if he does.” Tommy says.

The library is in sight.

The small van that they’ve seen everywhere around town is parked out front. Tubbo recognizes it as the van that’s with the orphanage in town. He’s never been to the orphanage, but the van is pretty big and recognizable.

Tommy groans next to him. “Great, we’ll have to deal with a bunch of little snotty kids.”

“They’re not that bad.” Tubbo says, rolling his eyes. “They stick to the little kid books, anyway. Not the big kid books around us.” He gives his best friend a grin. “C’mon, let’s go grab our usual spot.”

They may have a small town, but the town dedicates a lot of time and money into the library. It’s a modest two-stories, shelves packed to the brim with books. Most donated, some brand new, some old copies from ages before Tubbo was born. They have a little room for kids to play in while older kids who might be babysitting them or their parents browse the books, half of the bottom floor is dedicated to the child-to-YA category of books, and there are a few tables set up around a glass balcony that shows off the first floor on the second.

It’s pretty poggers.

“Ah, shit, I need to go find Beowulf for class.” Tommy groans. He doesn’t like English that much, and they’re reading awful language-- Tubbo knows Beowulf, remembers how much he hated it, too, but at least he knows what the questions are gonna be for Tommy’s quizzes and essays, so he can help somewhat. Tommy stops in the middle of the library though.

He freezes up. Leans over to Tubbo. “Is that Ranboo over there?”

Tubbo follows his gaze, and it definitely is their friend Ranboo, that they hadn’t heard from in a few days. He’s looking at a few books in the young adult section, but he keeps glancing

up and around, like he's somewhere he shouldn't be.

He looks.

Well, he looks awful. Tubbo is brutally honest, and he can tell that Ranboo looks *awful*. There are deep bags under his eyes, and his usually neatly-styled hair is a bit of a mess. Brushed out, but not with any care. He's a little paler and hunches over more than he usually does.

He's a tall person. Taller than Tommy and most of his family, which Tubbo didn't think was possible, but Ranboo is *tall*. He shrinks himself down with a bit of a slouch, and it's definitely gotten worse.

Something is wrong. Tubbo can feel it in his soul that something is wrong with Ranboo.

He did say something big happened a while ago, Tubbo thinks, remembering the text message a few weeks ago. *I hope he's okay, but he doesn't look it...*

“Tommy, I--” He turns over to Tommy to tell him something, but it falls on deaf ears. Tommy's already making his way over to Ranboo. “Damn it.”

“Ey, what the fuck is up, Ranboo?!” Tommy says, really obnoxiously loudly. Ranboo looks up, and it's a deer-in-the-headlights look. He drops the book out of shock, and picks it up quickly, trying to remember where it was in the shelf.

“Tommy, shh!” Tubbo catches up quickly and tugs on his arm. They both duck into the same shelf as Ranboo. “We're in a library, idiot.”

Tommy blows a raspberry at him.

Tubbo glances back to Ranboo, and grabs onto Tommy's arm a little tighter. He remembers to pull more at his sleeve than the actual flesh, he doesn't want to bruise with his strength again, but the look Ranboo gives them sends a shudder down his spine.

It's a look of pure fear.

Not *disgust*. Not like what he had worried about, introducing Ranboo to magic. It was obvious he was raised in a strict, probably religious household, the way he talked about church and the way he just talked in general. He never cursed, he was always polite, he remembered his manners, he only just got a phone, he didn't know what Minecraft was-- those small details helped put a little bit of his past together.

And Tubbo was worried that Ranboo would see magic and drop them completely. He didn't, at least.

But this look of pure fear was worrying. The dark circles, the way he held himself, something had definitely happened since their last study session.

“Are you okay--”

Ranboo shakes his head. He speaks a little too quickly. "No, I'm-- I'm sorry, I can't talk to you guys anymore." He digs into the pocket of his jacket, and pulls out an envelope, thrusts it into Tommy's hands, before pushing through them and running away.

He runs straight to one of the nuns on the other side of the room, who had turned her head to look directly at them. Something about her glare sends another shiver down Tubbo's spine.

This gets on Tommy's nerves immediately, who hands the letter to Tubbo and yells out, "Ay, what the fuck--"

He's cut off by Tubbo elbowing him. A little extra force put into it to make him really quiet down. "Did you see how he looked? Something isn't right." He glances at the envelope, and slowly tears it open.

He reads the letter. Once, twice. The letters get a little mixed up like they usually do, so he tries to read it slowly and re-read it just a little slower, so the words help sink in. He glances up at Tommy.

"Tommy, this isn't good."

Phil thinks that he's a lot of things.

A patient man, for one. With the kids that he's had to raise, it only makes sense that he would be patient. He called them out when it got to be too much, of course, and he had fun with his kids when the time came, but he like to *think* that he's a patient man.

When Ranboo came into their life, Phil thought it was just another school friend. Or something similar, whatever they could do over the summer. He really just didn't care that much about the boy Tommy spoke of in passing the butter at the dinner table.

"He's a weird fuckin' kid, but at least he fits in with me n' Tubbo." Tommy said the first night.

There was no sign, whatsoever, that Ranboo would be inclined towards magic. Tommy had quite a few friends who were magically gifted, some more than others, in their small little secret community in the town. Everyone knew... Everyone, really. There were only ever a few outsiders, but when they were found by the group, they were welcomed immediately.

Tubbo, for example. From a family of duds, he suddenly appeared. Magic brought him to everyone else, even if he didn't know it.

But Tommy also has friends who aren't magically inclined, too. He talks to a lot of people, he's very social (or, as Techno would complain, *loud*, and Wilbur, *obnoxious*, which are both true)-- it makes sense that he can walk up to a random kid and befriend them.

That was until he *met* Ranboo, the day of their summer zoo trip.

It was a nice day out, and they had agreed to pick Ranboo up at the park. He didn't say why he didn't want Phil to drive just to his house, but it wasn't Phil's duty to ask. He was really

just the driver of the friends, and Techno had tagged along, book in hand, because Phil didn't want him spending another lonely day in the house with Wilbur gone as well with his own friends.

But Ranboo... Well, Phil could tell that he was different.

He was awkwardly tall with long limbs, had dark hair with streaks of gray already forming in them, and he never looked anyone right in the eyes. If anything, he looked elsewhere, and he was shy, and awkward, and quiet, compared to the loud-mouthed Tommy and Tubbo, who could get equally as loud when Tommy was around.

Ranboo was the antithesis to Tommy. It was strange and weird that they had become friends, but something *else* was different about him. Phil couldn't tell what, so he did what he always did.

Talk to Techno about it.

While the three kids ran off to explore the zoo, Techno made a beeline for the cafe in it, and Phil followed suit.

"What do you think of Ranboo?" He asks when they were in line for their drinks.

Techno shrugs. The younger man has worn his hair down in a long braid, and with his gold-framed glasses and simple white shirt, he looks quite regal. The old copy of *The Odyssey* only adds to the regal look.

"He's another kid." Techno replies. "Kinda quiet. That's really nice."

Phil chuckles. With all the loud friends that he's had to deal with, a quiet friend is a nice change of pace. "Yeah..."

"Why?" They take another step forward in the line.

"I mean. I don't know for *sure*, but..." He trails off, hoping that Techno picks up on his train of thought.

"Oh. *Oh.*" Techno tries to avoid emotion whenever possible, but even his eyes widen a bit at that.

"Yeah."

They order their drinks and sit down by a window, where they can see directly out into a little plaza. He immediately gets a buzz from his phone, a text from Tommy, saying that their little group of three had gotten split up.

"God damnit." The one thing Phil had said to them was *don't lose each other*, especially since other gifted people had reported sightings of dreamons in the last week, and the last thing anyone needed was a dreamon attack in the middle of a zoo.

"They got lost already?"

“Separated.” Phil glances out the window. He can’t spot any of them easily. “Hopefully nothing bad happens.”

Dreamons wouldn’t prey normally at a zoo. Animals cannot be prey to them like humans can, and there were one too many humans for them to be snooping around. But if even the likes of Dream have taken on the dreamons lately and nearly lost, there was trouble afoot.

“Hopefully.” Techno opens his book.

Phil glances down at his phone. Tommy already found Tubbo, and they were looking for Ranboo.

THE CHILD: ranboo is apparently right by the cafe, told him to go find u and techno

PHIL: Okay, cool!

Phil glances back out the window. He can barely spot the tall, dark-haired figure in the crowd. Hopefully he’ll be walking over soon, and then they can wait for Tommy and Tubbo to make their way to the cafe so the whole group can meet up again.

But Ranboo doesn’t make his way anywhere in the crowd. He’s just standing there.

THE CHILD: ranboo says u gotta go get him

It’s a weird request. Surely Ranboo could see him in the window, right? The cafe wasn’t that busy and he had a clear shot to look directly there and he’d notice them, but Phil shrugs and stands up.

“I gotta go get Ranboo.”

Techno doesn’t look up from his book, but he nods to acknowledge that he heard Phil.

Ranboo is easy to find and a little nervous through it all, but Phil just shakes it off as nerves. He seemed like he was a pretty sheltered kid, and he did say it was his first time at the zoo, so it was probably strange to be around so many people.

Right?

That’s what Phil thought, until *that day*.

There’s a lot of days that he can describe as *That Day* in his head. It’s unfortunate there are so many big things happening in his life that he can list and rank the many days where things went incredibly wrong, got incredibly dangerous, or were just plain weird with his family. The day they realized Tommy’s gift was *That Day*, a day that a few dreamons attacked the orchard was also *That Day*.

That Day, or as Wilbur dubbed it, *That Day In Which Ranboo Finds Out*, very eloquently, was the day that his son and his son’s two friends appeared in the front yard in a flash of white. He had seen the flash from inside the living room, where he’d been trying so

desperately to find a certain book, but it was all forgotten about when he noticed the light of the amaryllis pendant.

It was a special kind of magic, that he and Techno worked together on, so that if the boys are ever in deep trouble, they can call upon it and use it as a near instant escape. It required a crossroads, or a bridge, of some sorts, but with the creeks and rivers and railroad tracks that run through town, it wasn't that hard to find something that could qualify as such.

Ranboo, however, was a surprise.

He had known that Ranboo would be meeting them at the park that day and thought nothing of it, but glancing out the living room window and seeing not two but *three* heads, and his heart did sink a little bit.

Breaking the news to Ranboo was tough. He seemed pretty religious-- not devout, or pious, but he was obviously raised in organized religion-- so the sudden shock of *oh yeah, magic exists*, must have been a lot, but he was calmed down by the end of the day.

He definitely had some kind of magic. Phil could feel it-- the thinnest line of connection between Ranboo and magical energy. It wasn't very strong, like it had been buried deep within him for a while. No one could do that to a person except themself, and, if Ranboo had never met Tommy, he probably would never truly awaken his magic.

It would just be odd occurrences around Ranboo for his whole life, but some occurrences that could be explained.

He didn't know much about his parents-- so possibly, another case like Tubbo, who had been born the odd one out in his family with the first deep connection to magic in years. Which Phil was fine with. Even though none of Tubbo's family knew the truth of why their son was so strong and durable, at least he had a place to work out the extra magical energy without it building up now.

Ranboo didn't have that. He was older, too, but Phil's met with people who never discovered their magical gifts until their mid-twenties, so Ranboo isn't a particularly late bloomer. And he had the experience with Tubbo adjusting to the magic, so hopefully he would be able to help Ranboo out, as well, whenever the time came that his magic awakened.

It was only a matter of time, especially after something as traumatizing as almost being eaten by a dreamon.

And when Ranboo directed him back to his home, well.

Phil had seen the orphanage in his many drives. He hadn't been there, of course-- Wilbur and Tommy were adopted, but adopted through means outside the orphanage and within the magical community. Wilbur had been six when he was at his doorstep with one of Phil's old friends, asking to take the young boy in, and Tommy wasn't even two years old when he ended up in Phil's care. So he's never dealt with orphanages themselves, but they were probably good institutions, right?

He hoped.

He was wrong to hope, it seems, when Tommy and Tubbo end up cutting off their study session at the library short in a flash of hasty, white light in the front yard.

Tommy is trying to be strong-- Phil has seen the look on his face before, like the time their pet goldfish died when he was younger and he was trying to not cry as they held a viking funeral in a kiddie pool in their backyard. (Wilbur's idea.) He'd seen it when the boy was hurt, injured, limping from one too many hits from a dreamon attack.

Tubbo was a little worse-off. His eyes were clearly red, from rubbing away tears, and he shook a little bit when he took breaths.

Ranboo had disappeared again on them, but they had assumed that he was grounded.

The contents of the letter they got showed otherwise.

Chapter End Notes

"Oh hey Cosmo why did you decide to write in two different POVs for this chapter?"

Well, dear reader, thank you for asking. I will answer with this one statement.

I needed a break from endless Ranboo angst. I'm sure you do, too.

Of course, this chapter is still angsty. But it gives you a little bit more of the world, doesn't it? :)

Also, I made a playlist for Promised Land! It's in the classic 8tracks style (if you remember that website, welcome to the Cool Kids Club, we have meetings every third Saturday in the afternoon, don't forget to bring your favorite kind of dessert food to it). I listen to my general writing playlist when writing, but if you guys wanna know the songs I vibe with for this story, here you go!

Promised Land // Playlist

- 1. Promiseland - MIKA**
- 2. Bethlehem - Selmer**
- 3. Saint Bernard - Lincoln**
- 4. Home - Cavetown**
- 5. Sweet Hibiscus Tea - Penelope Scott**
- 6. In our Bedroom After The War - Stars**
- 7. The Good In Me - Jon Bellion**
- 8. The Other Side of Paradise - Glass Animals**

Are some of these songs foreshadowing? B) Only time will tell...

See you next chapter for your regularly scheduled Ranboo angst

[twitter](#)

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Can't Believe You Thought That Would Work

Chapter Notes

content warning:

- no more than your usual ranboo angst from the previous chapters. welcome back, friends :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It's raining again. He's always afraid of the rain, but the way it hits the window and the water falls down it is transfixing for the moment of rest he takes, leaning on the mop.

Chores day. Ranboo doesn't like new chores day. It's a lot more work now, especially since another wave of adoptions went through, and they're down *five* less kids.

Never him, of course, but he can't help but dream of the day he gets out of the orphanage.

He hasn't been out since the last time he went to the library. He wasn't originally supposed to go with the orphanage. It was supposed to be just another study day with his friends. But since he was banned from seeing them again-- *sometimes just thinking of their names makes him nervous like Sister Agnes can read minds even though she obviously can't*-- he couldn't go.

But the timings matched up right on some books he had to return, and by some miracle of God, he was able to join the younger kids. Since the weather on the weekend was supposed to be, for lack of better words, *crappy all day*, the sisters decided that an early trip to the library to return some books, pick up a few more, do their usual library thing would've been much better to do.

The letter felt like it was burning a hole in his pocket and he felt his ears burn as he ran past his former-friends, but.

It was a goodbye. It wasn't the one he wanted, but it was better than not giving them anything and having them hate him for the rest of their lives.

He glanced out the window again. He doesn't want to be at the orphanage anymore.

He wishes it didn't have to be, as he pulls his attention from the rain outside and back to mopping the tile of the main entrance. The water splashes in the bucket as he squishes the

mop around to get the dirt off.

All the rainy and muddy fall days brought a lot of mud in the front room. Even though everyone tries to wipe off their boots, or go through the back, it always ends up caked in mud. The tile is dark enough for someone to not notice it visually, but if they want to be an upstanding orphanage, then they need to keep it as clean as they possibly can.

Which Ranboo has been doing a lot, lately. Cleaning.

It seems when Sister Agnes decided that he wasn't doing enough work with his schoolwork, he could be useful elsewhere. Dusting. Vacuuming. Organizing papers. Wiping. Mopping. He was no stranger to helping out with chores, maybe a little more than the younger kids as he grew older, but with how many times he's cleaned everything imaginable in the orphanage for the past few weeks, Ranboo is getting sick of it.

He's, well.

He's actually getting sick of a lot of things, he's realizing. He wants it to go back to Before so badly. He doesn't want to deal with cleaning and helping with the baby (though, the baby was just adopted, so he doesn't have to help change diapers and clean up baby spittle everywhere anymore) and helping Sister Marie with other chores. He wants it to be like it once was.

Of course, as much as he wishes, nothing can bring Sister Anne back to life, so he pops the mop back in the bucket and swishes it around in the water again. He'll probably need to change the water soon-- the downstairs bathroom has the tub perfect for carrying the mop in, luckily. Unluckily, it'll become just another thing to clean when he's done.

And on that day when my strength is --

The playlist on his phone gets cut off when he gets tangled in his earbuds and they're torn from the jack. He drops the mop on his foot, and bites into his lip to avoid crying out in pain.

Sister Agnes is on the phone in the other room. He doesn't want to disturb her.

At least his foot caught the mop, but it knocked a lot more water out of the bucket. He looks at it and sighs.

He's tired.

He's really, really tired. Even though it's been-- it's been almost a month, time flies by so fast, only a few days since he gave out the letter as a final goodbye-- that long, he has been sleeping much worse.

His sleepwalking is getting worse.

Of course, he's not going to get any help with it, not any time soon.

Still my soul will sing Your praise unending...

He stifles a yawn. Maybe if he finishes his chores, he can try to sneak in a quick nap, before a nap sneaks up on him, instead.

The sound of shoes echoing on tile is enough to wake him up. He tries to stand up straighter when Sister Agnes leaves her office.

She notices him, immediately. She looks down at the floor.

“... You missed a spot.”

“I- um. I know.” He replies. He stifles another yawn. It’s barely two. “I’m getting it.”

There’s a brief... Flash of something, in her eyes. She isn’t very expressive until it comes to disappointment or anger, so when another emotion comes out it’s more noticeable. He sees it.

Ranboo doesn’t know what the emotion was. It’s gone as fast as it happens.

“Best get to it, then.” She says, curtly. As if the emotion never passed from her eyes. She glances back to the window. “The rain should stop tomorrow night, so hopefully all this *mud* will finally cease.” She spits out the word mud like it’s a sin.

Everything seems to be sinful or dirty to Sister Agnes.

“After mopping, Ranboo, would you mind sweeping in my office, as well?” The nun asks as she turns and begins her way to the kitchen. Probably to get ready for snack-time for the younger kids. It’s almost 2:30.

He nods, not saying a word and turning back to mopping.

“Thank you, dear. Your future wife will be very blessed to have a hard-working man like you.” She says.

And leaves.

Even though he passes out as he hits the pillow most nights, it’s never a full sleep. It’s not restful.

It’s 1:06 AM when he wakes up the first time that night. He groans. It wasn’t in the middle of a sleepwalk, *thank you, God*, but he was up later than he normally would be, trying to fold his laundry that he had forgotten about after dinner.

Not too late.

But he was definitely exhausted, and waking up for no reason at 1:06 AM is not anything fun. He sighs and sits up.

Sleep will avoid him for the next few hours, the least he can do is do something productive. Maybe it will tire him out, maybe he’ll fall asleep faster.

He gets up and pads softly across his bedroom, to his desk. It's by his window. His only window.

With the bars on it.

He glances out the window-- the rain has stopped early. A blessing, for once. The sky has little clouds now, and an almost-full moon (waxing or waning, he can never remember which word it is) lights up the side yard.

It's a little transfixing, the lights of the stars and the moon, and if the iron bars didn't exist in front of his window, he would definitely crack the old glass open and lean onto the screen.

Well.

The bars are supposed to keep him from falling out, but it's probably too chilly to open it, anyway.

He sighs. Gets on his knees, leans on the windowsill. Doesn't put his face into the glass, but his arms dig into it a little bit. It's cold.

"God." He mumbles out. Not really a direct prayer or anything, but it's something more than just talking to himself. "Do... Do you listen to me?"

The moon doesn't blink back at him. None of the stars move.

He leans more into his arms.

"I don't know what I'm doing wrong, anymore." Ranboo lets out a deep sigh. "Sister Agnes keeps giving me work. Housework and schoolwork. I haven't left the orphanage since the library. I guess being able to leave like I was over the summer was only a temporary thing."

Why.

"Why is everything only temporary in my life?" He glances back up at the sky. "Why can't I just... be happy? I'm trying, God, but you're not really giving me any help, here."

If you ask, God will provide, he was taught.

He asks. He's been asking for years. To be adopted, to have a family, to have a home. To have friends, to be able to exist outside the orphanage.

To... be free.

All he wants is to be free, isn't it?

That's why he's tried to start the mental countdown. It isn't going well, but he's been shoving more loose papers into an old notebook to write down his thoughts now, and tries to remember the countdown. They're less organized. He forgets dates and they're probably not in the right order. The books that contain his memory are a jumbled mess, just like him.

The countdown until he ages out of the system. Still two years away.

He can wait that long, right?

Ranboo leans back out from the window and lays his head back on the floor. Softly, not like he would be if he woke up sleepwalking and had an ache in his neck.

He glances to his bed.

And... he takes a second.

He blinks. Once, twice.

Ranboo sits up. Stands up. Goes over to his bed. He feels his blood rush up into his head and his ears, and he takes a staggering gasp.

On his bed is. Well.

It's him.

It's him, sound asleep.

Ranboo pulls his arms closer into him, taking a few steps back. How had he not-- how had he not noticed? His staggering back makes him trip and he hits the ground, hard, but nothing in his room shakes from the impact.

What. What? *What? What??*

He-- his other self. His other body?-- is still in bed. He doesn't move a inch in his deep sleep. It's nice to know that *some* one is getting sleep, at least. But he pulls his arms in closer, and scoots back into the wall out of fear, out of confusion, out of-- out of something, he doesn't know *what*.

"I have to be dreaming," he says to himself. "This is just a dream. This is all just a really, really *weird dream--*"

He wakes up on the floor where he had been moments before. The sun is rising through the window, and the sound of the key unlocking his door echoes through his room.

The rain stopped at some point. *Last night, he looked out his window, saw the moon--*

Ranboo glances down at his hands. Everything is solid. Everything is real.

It was just...

It was just a bad dream.

It wasn't, a voice in the back of his head says.

It was just a bad dream. Ranboo tells himself.

He ignores it, stretches his aching limbs, and collapses back into his bed. Despite the fact that it's a Sunday, exhaustion and sleepiness still wears down on him. He has to get up and get ready for church, soon. And then they have brunch, and then he can sleep more.

But he just needs another second on his bed.

He isn't startled anymore by the sound of the door locking. When they first started doing it, he would pay all his attention to it, sit on his bed and watch his door until the *clunk* happened. He would flinch at the sound, sigh to himself, curl his body up as small as he could.

Now, when it happens, with the added sound of the old, wooden chair being dragged on the hallway carpet for good measure, he notices it.

He knows it happens.

Ranboo has accepted it.

The jingle of keys echoes down the hall as one of the nuns-- he thinks it might be Sister Marie this time, he knows that Sister Agnes walks harder on the old wood and her footsteps carry more meaning and weight and as weird as it is, emotion-- walks back to their side of the orphanage, where they would be sleeping.

Strange, he thinks, sitting back in his desk chair, that they all sleep on the other side of the building. He turns back to his desk.

More loose papers are scattered about. He's trying to remember the order of things-- *did this happen before or after that thing? When did this happen? When did that happen?* -- because it turns out, not getting a new journal and scribbling his thoughts onto loose sheets of paper and stuffing them in the back of an old journal is not the best way to go about it.

He should be thankful, though, that Sister Agnes was merciful enough to let him stay in the orphanage still, he thinks.

On top of the loose papers is the small remains of his last journal.

Magic.

He doesn't know why he's kept it so long. The paper has definitely seen better days-- one of the few surviving bits of the fire-- and it's crumpled up from being shoved in his pocket. The pencil is faded, but the word is still incredibly legible.

Magic.

He's trying to remember everything that Phil had told him about the magic, when he was still allowed to go out and see his friends. He...

Ranboo doesn't remember.

It brings angry tears to his eyes. That so many memories were just torn from his mind like that. Maybe, he thinks, it was for the best-- but the memories were important to him.

Without his memories, who is he?

Who is Ranboo?

Orphan, lost child. Sleepwalker. Facialy blind. Alone.

He picks up the small piece of surviving paper. It's a reminder.

It's his only reminder.

He wouldn't forget Tubbo or Tommy or Phil or-- *well, Tommy had two brothers, but he can't remember their names now*-- anything that happened over summer. He wouldn't *forget*, but it feels like memories are slipping through his fingers like he's dug his hands in sand.

Slipping away.

Ranboo knows his mind can at least hold onto the big memories. Not many from his childhood, but there are certain things that don't slip away.

Mostly... Traumatic ones, now that he thinks about it. The times the kids would read his journals and laugh. Getting in trouble, his knuckles burning and bruised. The zoo trip-- a happy one.

The dreamon.

Sister Anne.

He shudders.

He would remember the dreamon and he would remember *magic*. He would remember it.

But the details? Phil's house is already fuzzy in his mind. There was some kind of orchard. He can't remember their magic, either. He knows they have magic, but...

They had specific types of magic, right?

He buries his face in his hands. Even though he tries to comb through his brain for the memories, he can't remember.

He wants to remember. He wants to remember he wants to remember *he wants to remember--*

Thunk.

There's a sound at his window.

He brushes it off, focusing instead on the papers in front of him. He needs to get them organized. Maybe he'll be able to recall better a conversation that happened a week ago, instead of mixing it up for something that happened today. His days are bleeding together again-- which is good for his memory in general, but for specific things it sucks.

Thunk.

He ignores it.

Until a shadow falls across his face, and he looks up to see *Tommy* hanging on the bars outside his window. The blond's arms are awkwardly curled around the iron, and he smiles wide-- *did he always have braces?*-- when Ranboo finally notices him. He waves.

But it makes everything *sink* in Ranboo.

This wasn't good-- he knew it. Why was Tommy here?

Was he dreaming again?

No, he wasn't. Ranboo never dreams. Two nights in a row-- *that wasn't a dream*-- is practically unheard of.

Against his better judgement-- ignore Tommy, pray he goes away, go about his night-- he walks over and opens the window.

"Fuckin' finally!" Tommy isn't dressed in any thick layers-- it's just a simple jacket, Ranboo notices. "I've been hanging onto this for a good five minutes. It's cold out here!"

When Ranboo glances out the window, he can look down and see the small figure of Tubbo standing in the grass below of the side-yard. "You shouldn't-- you shouldn't be here."

"I mean Phil *knows* I'm here, I told him that Tubbo an' I were gonna break you out of this place. He didn't try to stop me."

"Break-- break me out?"

"Yeah!" Tommy nods. He shifts again, trying to get more comfortable hanging off the bars, but it makes him look even more feral than he ever has before. "Jesus Christ, why the fuck do you have these stupid bars on your window?"

"So I don't, um. Fall out of the window." The screen was never that sturdy. If he leans against it with just a small amount of force, it'll tear. He's seen the younger kids tear their screens, and it always ended in reprimands from Sister Marie and grumpy looks from Sister Agnes who has to buy more screens.

But his is much older, probably needs to be repaired soon anyway, but it'll last long enough if he doesn't touch it.

"Fall out? What the fuck," Tommy's voice raises, but he catches himself. "Alright, look, Ranboo. I can't hold onto these bars forever, so if you could kindly just come outside so we

can go--"

"I can't." Ranboo interrupts. He can't leave-- he can't leave, the sisters will get angry, he'll get punished again, maybe his other journals will get burnt, *what is he without his memory*--

"We're trying' to rescue you. Please cooperate." He slips on the bars and barely catches himself. Below him, Tubbo moves, ready to catch Tommy if it's needed.

Rescue you. What does Ranboo need saving from? He's-- he's fine where he is. He's completely fine where he is and where he has been, his whole life. It's a little rough sometimes, but he has a roof over his head, he gets three meals (and a snack!) a day, warm food and warm water to take showers with, he has his own bed and room, all he has to do is wait until he ages out.

He.

He's fine.

No, you're not. A taunting voice in his head says. *Not fine at all.*

He's fine.

Ranboo's mind flashes to Sister Agnes burning his journal. He remembers the pit in his stomach as she stood there with it only moments before. He remembers-- he doesn't want to remember, but he remembers-- the hours he spent in the church, praying for forgiveness, kneeling down before the cross, wooden rosary tied between his fingers and hands.

"I can't," he says, again. He looks away. He never makes eye contact but he doesn't want to look in Tommy's direction.

"Well, why the *fuck* not!?" Tommy's voice is a little louder. Ranboo flinches.

Ranboo stares at his door.

"Don't make me jump down and get Tubbo up here. He's got those nasty puppy dog eyes--"

"E-Even if I wanted to, I still couldn't." Ranboo doesn't tear his eyes away from the door. "They-- the Sisters lock my door at night so I don't end up hurting myself when I sleepwalk."

Tommy's silent for a moment. It's a rare moment for Tommy to be silent, but he's silent. Ranboo doesn't need to turn his head and know that Tommy is in... *awe*, shocked awe, of what he just said.

He's mentioned the sleepwalking problem before. He talks about how his caregivers aren't a big fan of it, but they haven't gotten him help yet. He knows he should get help, but the nuns definitely won't be taking him to a sleep doctor anytime soon. Ranboo just has to wait.

He just has to be patient. *He just has to wait.*

"Well, um." Tommy sighs. Ranboo turns his head, but he looks at the way the full moon silhouettes Tommy's limbs tangled in the bars instead of at his face. "What about tomorrow? We can sneak out of school, and come get you, and you won't have to be stuck in this hellhole anymore!"

Hellhole? "Tommy, I--"

His voice freezes up. Everything goes silent.

There's an echo of a key in his door.

"In *all my years* of running an orphanage, I have *never* seen anything as foolhardy as what I have witnessed tonight!"

Sister Agnes is *really angry*. Ranboo holds his breath as he peers his head into the main hall.

It wasn't like Tommy and Tubbo were particularly quiet in their failed rescue attempt. Tommy had climbed up to the second story and tangle his limbs up on the bars outside Ranboo's window, and Tubbo was just *standing there*, in full view of the bay window of the kitchen. They weren't stealthy at all.

It was a *miracle* that they weren't noticed *sooner*.

The police were called. One police officer was talking to Sister Agnes, now.

Tommy and Tubbo were waiting in a car outside the orphanage for their parents to pick them up. Or, well, it was just Phil who came.

"Yes, ma'am, it is quite the interesting situation--" the young officer looks like he isn't getting paid as much as he should, and dealing with a 70-plus-year-old angry nun is leagues above his pay.

Ranboo can peer out through one of the windows where he stands quietly and see Tommy's hunched form in the back of a car.

His stomach feels like it has eaten itself. The chilling sound of his name being called after the echo of the key in the door, along with hearing Tommy yelp and fall on the ground is a bad memory. He hopes he forgets it.

He won't.

But he can hope.

Nothing was taken away from him, this time. He shut his window as quickly as he could and tried to look innocent. He didn't want to get in trouble with Sister Agnes again. *Please, God, please, I was trying to shoo him away, not join him. Please have mercy*, his thoughts ran, hoping that God would hear his plight.

Sister Agnes seemed too angry at the other two than at Ranboo, at least, but he knew that if he stepped out wrong-- or if he even made any noise where he stood, at that moment-- the punishment would come sooner. It might be a little worse.

But he has to hear this.

Something's compelling him to.

Plus, it was not even midnight. His brain wouldn't shut up and let him sleep for the next few hours, at the very least, and it's not like Ranboo has anything better to do.

He can faintly see the silhouette of Phil. Mostly just his shadow.

"I can-- I can assure you, I had no idea they were going to do this."

Liar, Ranboo thinks. Tommy *said* Phil knew they were going to do this. Or, well, maybe Tommy had left a note or something in Tommy fashion and just did it, anyway. Maybe.

Sister Agnes takes a deep breath. Steels herself. She looks at Phil. The officer stood between them to prevent any violence, but Ranboo could never imagine Phil fighting a nun.

Even if Sister Agnes was acting *like this*.

"I swore an oath to God that I would protect all the children here until they were to be adopted, and that includes children as old as Ranboo." She says. Her voice is a little cooler now, but the anger still radiates through the walls. If he closes his eyes, he can imagine the ruler. "You and your family, sir, have done nothing but problems for him since you have come into his life."

"Excuse me--" Phil asks, but he's interrupted.

"Ranboo is a good soul. A sweet, kind, soul. And I do not want him *corrupted* by all the ideas of *magic* and *monsters* you've filled his head with!" There's a waving of an indignant finger.

He tried to keep the magic thing a secret, but the Sisters found out, anyway.

"If I ever see you, or any of your children, on my property again..." Sister Anne continues. "I will not hesitate to call the police again, and file a restraining order on behalf of my orphanage."

Ranboo can't do it anymore. He takes a few steps back, and the way the door is propped open, he can see a bit more of the room, with Sister Agnes' back turned towards him.

He can see Phil's face. Not literally-- the details are muddy. But he can make out the shock on his face, and they lock eyes.

There's a brief moment where Ranboo feels like everything is safe, everything will be *okay*, but it over quickly a fear and anxiety and a little bit of nausea takes over and he makes a quiet sprint for his stairs.

It's best that he pretends he went to sleep after all of this.

It's best that he forgets completely about magic.

Chapter End Notes

WELL MR PHILZA MINECRAFT THIS IS THROWING A WRENCH IN YOUR PLAN TO ADOPT RANBOO HUH B)

This is one of the scenes I've seen so clearly since I posted, like, the third chapter. Of Tommy hanging off the iron bars outside Ranboo's window for dear life with Tubbo below him, trying to rescue Ranboo but failing spectacularly. Maybe if Wilbur or Techno were there, it would've gone differently. I guess we may never know.

Also, what's with that weird dream, Ranboo? :)

I don't have any other interesting commentary here other than this chapter surpassed 4k words and I'm now at 100 pages on my google doc for this story what the heck I--

But I'm glad y'all enjoyed the brief interlude!! Welcome back to your regularly scheduled Ranboo angst. Though, the end is inching closer to being in sight. Just hold hands guys, you can make it through together <3

See you in the next chapter!

[twitter](#)

[tumblr](#)

Wait, Is This ACTUALLY Happening?

Chapter Notes

:)

ALSO, WE GOT [FANART???](#) AMAZING BEAUTIFUL AWESOME POG FANART?? THANK YOU. THANK YOU SO MUCH THAT'S SO COOL AAAAAA

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Phil's office is a small room tucked into the back of the house. Bookshelves line the walls with a variety of things stacked carefully in them, from antique books that Techno cares for, to the cheesy romance novel that Tommy got him for last Christmas because the man on the front looked just like him, to trinkets and bookends from around the world and photos of family, photos of friends, a few plants with their leaves and vines stretching out and about... A lot of things, mostly gifted to him or his family.

It was homey. There was a small plush chair pushed into the corner of the shelves with a few books stacked on top of it, and on the other side of the room was Phil's desk, where he hunched over files of paper that were usually neatly organized within the drawers.

But not tonight.

Phil knows, without a fraction of a doubt, that the boy that Tommy and Tubbo had befriended what feels like so long ago but was only a few months ago had to have a magical gift. Everything seemed to point in that direction.

And he's been looking into it, looking through old magical records that he tries to keep for the magical community of the town, trying to see if there was anyone who has gone missing that could be of some relation to Ranboo.

But.

It leads to dead end after dead end.

Ranboo just appeared one day, in his son's life and in life in general. And, well, maybe he's from a family like Tubbo's-- a family of non-magically inclined people. But Phil thought he had to at least try to look for any hints.

Phil didn't want to put Ranboo on the spot that day; after all, he had been through a dreamon attack and had his world flipped upside-down in only a few hours. If he hadn't mentioned being an orphan to Tommy or Tubbo, then it was his secret to divulge whenever he wanted to. He turned a blind eye when he dropped the boy off in front of the old building near the park.

Phil leans back in his chair. The rain has stopped, at least, but the autumn leaves are coming. It's almost the beginning of October, and it had been one-- two days since the incident.

This incident being Tommy trying to break Ranboo out of his orphanage.

Phil had overheard Tommy planning with Tubbo something to save their friend. He had read the note that the tall boy had quickly given to them before completely ghosting them, and the words broke Phil's heart. Having his own things burned because of a relation to magic? He couldn't even begin to fathom that.

He was thinking of it, though-- of going to that orphanage, of helping Ranboo out of it himself. He's adopted two kids already, and with all the chaos already existing under his roof, another teenager wouldn't be the end of the world. They had an extra bedroom for guests, but they never get out-of-town guests, so Ranboo could have it. Techno hardly used the room they had designated for him, so if they did get someone from out of town visiting, they could use that instead...

And then, of fucking course, he gets a call at midnight from the police telling him to pick up Tommy and Tubbo. He helped cover for Tubbo, but he never would have considered they would try and break Ranboo out like that, more or less getting caught that quickly. The nun who caught the two boys was the one that burned Ranboo's journal, Phil knew it immediately, and the way he got chewed out by her--

A knock on his door brings him back to reality. He can tell through the door it's Techno-- no overwhelming emotions, calm, stoic.

"You wanted to ask me something, Phil?" Techno asks. His hair is loose and untied, he isn't wearing his glasses.

Oh, right. He sits up straighter a bit in the old desk chair.

"You wouldn't happen to still know people who can forge shit, do you?" Phil asks.

He's got a plan. Or the beginnings of a plan, at the very least, but he can't do it alone. Techno, as long as he's known the younger-looking man, has a lot of connections everywhere. And if Phil can't go to the orphanage to get Ranboo, well...

Techno's usually emotionless face breaks out into a smirk.

It isn't often when someone comes to visit the orphanage.

Ranboo's had to mop, clean, dust, wipe down everything in the main hall, and Sister Joan has been barking cleaning orders at the younger kids as well as helping herself. The whole house was helping with cleaning, since Sister Agnes determined they had to have the place spotless, and the mystery person said that he would be coming *in an hour*.

Ranboo doesn't get his hopes up anymore. He knows that no one would want to adopt a teenager, especially a teenager with all the issues that he has. But he can feel the excitement

with the younger kids, and with the sisters as well.

There was a small wave of adoptions right as school seemed to start back up, and they'd only had one baby dropped off by their too-distant social worker in that amount of time. Sister Marie was devoting most of her time to nursing the almost newborn, and hasn't had time for much else other than caring for herself, too, which meant everyone had more responsibilities.

Which meant Ranboo had more responsibilities on top of everything else, but he was used to balancing one too many books at this point.

It's when the mystery man comes that Ranboo realizes *something* is familiar about him. He can't put his finger on it.

He's tall, and he dresses in a bit of a unique style-- not businessman, but something more vintage, Ranboo thinks, as he tries to peer around the corner as Sister Agnes greets him with a fake smile like she does with everyone who comes to visit. A white shirt is tucked into brown trousers, something that reminds him of a prince but also *something more Ranboo can't remember*. Some of the man's hair is pulled up in a ponytail, while the rest of it falls past his shoulders. The light hits the man's brown hair weirdly.

Not the sort of man Ranboo would expect to be looking to adopt a kid, especially from a religious orphanage like this, but he thinks that the man must have some sort of *money* for Sister Agnes to be letting him near the building.

Money that could go into taking care of the children, of course, not the pockets of any of the sisters.

"Welcome, welcome, sir!" Sister Agnes says. She doesn't reach out a hand or anything, merely keeps her hands folded together in front of her chest. "I will admit, I was shocked when you told me you were only a hour away in our phone call. Can I offer you any refreshments?"

Oh, yeah, *rich*, Ranboo thinks. Money unfortunately makes the world go round, and the orphanage has always been lacking-- they survive, but everything is getting old and worn-out, not to mention a decent chunk of the budget went into placing the bars outside Ranboo's window for his safety.

"A water will be fine." The man says.

His voice.

Ranboo knows his *voice*. He's heard it before.

He slowly backs away from the corner, holding the broom in his hands tightly. He should probably go help Sister Joan with the children, making sure they're all dressed nicely to meet the mysterious man, but his thoughts are threatening to drown him.

Where? Where? Where have I heard that voice before? Why can't I remember it?

Where? Why?

"Ah, Ranboo, there you are." Sister Joan's voice slices through his thoughts like they were butter. "Can you make sure the younger boys are looking nice?"

"Yes ma'am." Ranboo nods. He has to put the broom back, anyway, and he does, ditching it in the cleaning closet under the stairs and heading up as fast as he possibly can. The nuns were usually good about wrangling children in these events, but they were down one extra set of hands-- *and he tries to ignore the pain in his chest, the way the golden chain feels cold on his skin under his shirt*-- and with the newborn, it's getting harder.

Sister Agnes says that they're going to be getting a new Sister sent to the orphanage soon. An older lady who is looking to spend her final years closer to God, caring for young children, the whole schtick all the Sisters are at the orphanage for. Someone to take over for Marie in caring for the younger ones.

Sister Anne's replacement--

No. He stops his thoughts as he gets to the door to the boy's bathroom. He knocks on it. "Everything okay in there?"

"Yes!" A muffled voice comes from the other side. It's Christian. After all these years, he's still here. Ranboo can relate. But he's still young, there's still time for him. The bathroom door unlocks and opens.

The kids are getting dressed in the best clothes they have-- mostly their Sunday clothes. They want to look good for someone who might be their family soon, after all. They want to look presentable. Ranboo remembers fumbling with his Sunday clothes as a younger kid, when he still had hopes of finding a family.

"Do you know how to tie a tie?" Christian asks. The red tie is loose around his neck, and it looks like he's been trying to fumble with it for the past few minutes with no success.

Ranboo sighs and kneels down. It's not going to be perfect, but it'll still be tied and presentable, at least.

"Thanks, Ranboo!" Christian says. "How do I look?"

"Like you're about to go to church." Ranboo responds with a smile.

Christian nods, before running back off to his room to get his shoes. Ranboo still has to check on the two other boys, so he stands up from his knee and stretches his legs.

He doesn't want to be the one to follow the mystery man around, but he isn't the only one eavesdropping on the man and Sister Agnes as they walk around the orphanage. The three younger boys and a girl joins him as he curiously watches from the landing, leaning over the rails of the stairs to see down.

"He looks rich," one of the younger girls says. Her hair is neatly tied in braids, and she's in a simple little pink dress. "Do you think he's a prince?"

“Maybe!” A boy says. Christian laughs at them quietly, and Ranboo can’t help but roll his eyes with a smile.

They quiet down when the man and Sister Agnes get close enough to hear. Any minute now the children will go down to meet the man. Any moment, someone is going to find a new home.

Ranboo does feel a little bit of jealousy at that. All his life-- he’s wanted that moment to be for him. Maybe it’s a little selfish. Maybe someone else deserves it more than he does-- he still has a roof and food and a bed at the end of the day, he should be *thankful* for that. But-- but he wants it to be *him*, for once.

But it won’t be.

It never is.

“Now, Mr. Billiam,” --is that his *name*? Ranboo has to bite the inside of his cheek, because what kind of name is *THAT*?-- “May I ask what brought you to this place?”

They’re stopped not too far from the bottom of the stairs. The man-- *Billiam* -- is awkwardly holding a paper cup that probably once had water or juice in it. Ranboo can’t remember what he asked for.

“Sister, I’ll be honest. I’m getting older, I’m settling down, and all I’ve ever wanted to do is have a family. Even though I have no partner, the joy I would feel helping raise a child would be immeasurable.” The man says.

It’s weird.

Ranboo can’t place his finger on it. There’s something about Biliam’s tone-- is it the slight bit of annoyance he can feel, or is it a bit of a lie?-- that makes him think.

Not to mention, the voice is so familiar. *Why is it so familiar*--

“You are a kind man, Billiam.” Sister Agnes responds. There’s a bit of the same *annoyance-lie-venom* in her tone, as well. But she’s sucking it up for the money, it seems. She turns her head up.

Everyone’s at the landing now, and even Ranboo feels a little bit of embarrassment at getting caught peeking in.

“Alright, children, come on down and meet Mr. Biliam.”

The younger kids try to go calmly, as they’re taught to do, but there is still excitement that they can barely bury in them. Christian jumps down over the last step, and the two girls line up with big smiles on their face.

Ranboo follows behind them. He’s always behind them, or at the other end, separated. Standing a little further away.

Always.

Because no one *wants* teenagers. He knows this, the younger kids know this, even the Sisters know how hard it is for teenagers to be adopted. So he distances himself-- maybe it's to his own detriment, but he's been through hundreds of families visiting to find their new forever-family member. He's felt the rejection, the straight-up neglect, from adults as they look at kids who don't have memory problems and don't struggle to deal with faces (and kids who don't have sleepwalking issues as well, now).

If he distances himself a bit, it doesn't hurt as much.

"Children, this is Mr. Biliam." Sister Agnes introduces, as if the children didn't hear the man's weird name. But it's an official introduction. The younger kids smile and wave, some say *hello*, and Ranboo looks up from where he was nervously scratching at one of his fingers.

And then.

It hits him. Immediately, like a truck. Why Billiam is so familiar. Why it feels weird, why he recognizes the man's voice, why he remembers it, despite his bad memory.

He swallows. If he tries to imagine the man with a different shade of hair, there is no mistaking it.

Tommy's brother is the only person that Ranboo has ever met with bright *pink* hair. It looked like it had been poorly dyed brown, but Billiam-- *not his name*-- locks his eyes with Ranboo.

Technoblade.

The man grins slyly when they lock eyes, and Ranboo finally recognizes, finally *remembers*, finally realizes why his mind has been trying to figure out the connections it was making.

"Ah, who's the tall one, in the back?" He asks, keeping up the act perfectly.

Oh.

Oh.

Oh my goodness.

"Huh?" Sister Agnes is just as caught-off guard, as is Sister Joan, who had rushed from the kitchen to be an extra eye on the children. If Sister Marie were there, she might drop the baby, but the baby was napping, and maybe Techno had already seen the baby at that point. "Oh, um. You mean Ranboo?" She motions with her hand for Ranboo to come closer.

He does, a little bit. His entire body felt stiff, but he moved it anyway.

If Sister Anne were still here, how would she feel? He tries to distract from the sudden dawning realization of what was occurring. *She should be here, she should be here to watch this--*

-- *She is watching from heaven*, Ranboo tells himself. Watching and clapping. Maybe she has some heavenly popcorn with her, as well.

“Yes, him.” Techno takes a few steps closer. When the Sisters can’t see his face, he winks at Ranboo.

“Well, Ranboo is definitely, um. An orphan, as well as the younger children.” Sister Agnes stumbles over her words a little bit. “He does have-- he does have some issues, with his memory, and he cannot recognize faces, and a few other things--”

Ah. He feels his ears burn as Sister Agnes prattles off on his *issues* in front of everyone in the room.

“Eh, everyone has problems.” Technoblade shrugs.

“He’s also-- older, than a lot of the younger children,” Sister Agnes adds. “So if you really wanted to have that family you mentioned, wouldn’t someone younger be a much more viable option?”

No, please, please. Stop. Ranboo thinks, looking directly at the elder Sister. Even Sister Joan had began to give her a weird look. It’s his-- it’s his first chance to actually be adopted. It’s the first time that someone’s been interested in him.

It’s his only chance.

He thinks-- no. He *knows that* Techno being there disguised as another man is probably a plan by Phil, since he and Tommy and Tubbo were banned from being on the property of the orphanage with the *threat* of a restraining order. He knows-- he knows it means that they’re trying to get him out of the orphanage. He knows.

He couldn’t do it the other night when Tommy was knocking on his window. It was the middle of the night-- he would be technically *running away*, *he would be taken back if he was found*, it wouldn’t be a good idea.

But the orphanage is suffocating him. More and more, with each passing day, not just with chores he’s having to do to cover the loss of adults in the house. But with the attitudes. With the echo of a key in his door at night that’s meant to keep him safe but makes him feel more trapped than every before.

Because the truth is, he’s not fine anymore. Maybe he was lying to himself-- no, Ranboo was definitely lying to himself. He *isn’t* fine. And he wants to be a part of that world-- the world that Tommy and Tubbo and Phil and Techno and *whatever the name of Tommy’s other brother was Ranboo forgot* -- the world of *magic* -- because it can’t be a sin, can it?

God made everything in His image-- nothing can change that. Ranboo is supposed to love everything like He does. *And that includes magic, right?*

Technoblade lets the words sink in. Maybe seriously, maybe not. It’s hard to read.

"If he's older, then he already knows how to take care of himself. Sounds like a better deal to me." There's a laugh at the end.

No one laughs with him. Sister Agnes just blinks at him in response, and she takes a deep breath.

"Mr. Billiam, would you like to come to my office to talk about this?" She glances at Ranboo. "You can come as well, Ranboo."

He's never felt like his life was in more danger than at that moment. And there was that literal *monster* encounter he had a while ago, where his life was definitely in danger.

Chapter End Notes

I BET YOU DIDN'T SEE THAT COMING!

This is probably, like. My favorite plot point that I thought of in the first few chapters and went "Yeah. This needs to happen" and it's HAPPENING. Because, well, if Phil can't adopt Ranboo, and Wilbur is barely an adult on his own, there's only one person left and that's Techno. Does he have an emotional attachment to Ranboo? Not yet, but he sees how important Ranboo is to Tommy and Tubbo (and Phil safsd) that, when asked, sure, he'll use cheap hair dye and go undercover and adopt a kid. Why the hell not?

I was a little bit worried that I might be moving too fast but also this is my story. I can do what I want. There's more angst and trouble to come, of course, but hey, maybe we're FINALLY on the upswing?

This chapter started to get SUPER LONG so this part of the story isn't done yet, but the next part will probably be up pretty soon :)

AGAIN CHECK THE NOTES AT THE BEGINNING FOR THE SUPER COOL FANART WE GOT!!

See you guys then! :D <3

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Well, THAT Just Happened. And So Did This :)

Chapter Notes

[MORE FANART FROM ALLYKATS THANK YOU SO MUCH THIS MAKES MY HEART EXPLODE /pos](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Kids aren't usually allowed in Sister Agnes' office. Sure, when someone gets adopted, finds their forever home, their new family brings them into the office to sign all the final papers. But most of the time it's closed off, the door shut, whether the head of the orphanage was in there working or not.

So being in it makes Ranboo feel like *something* is about to happen. He doesn't know what.

The walls are high in the room, and large windows open up to the side yard of the house, opposite of his own room. An old Apple desktop sits on the desk, where some papers are piled up neat and orderly. There's a photo of the Pope on one of the walls, along with a cross and a smaller chair and table in one corner. There's a lamp and a bible on the table, but it looks a little dusty.

Other than that, the room feels bare. Empty. Cold.

"I suppose we should get this process started." Sister Agnes says, taking a seat by the computer. On the other side of the desk are two other chairs, evenly spaced apart.

The room was *really* big and empty. It felt... lifeless. Ranboo really didn't like it.

She adjusts her glasses. "Mr. Billiam, I want to ask you this *again*, are you sure this is what you want to do?"

Techno nods without hesitation. "Yeah, you don't really need to keep questioning it. I want to adopt Ranboo."

Were it not for the cold and empty feeling in the room, Ranboo would probably break out into tears. It was happening. It was finally happening-- the thing he had been praying for, the thing he had been begging for. He had imagined the day so many times when he was younger--

-- and, well, he didn't expect it to be the brother of the first friends he made outside of the orphanage --

-- yet here he was. This was happening.

The sister nods, and turns to her computer, but Ranboo glances around the room and notices something that maybe he should have noticed before. Something that stood out.

Sister Agnes doesn't have a shadow. Despite being lit up from behind her by the late-afternoon cloudy sky, she didn't have a shadow.

The feeling crashes into him instantly. It's wrong, it's wrong, it's *wrong it's wrong*. Something is telling him to run.

Run.

It makes him shudder, and Techno glances at Ranboo with a confused look on his face, before turning back to Sister Agnes.

Why? Why does it suddenly feel so wrong? Ranboo thinks. It should be the best day of his life, but something is wrong about this. Something is definitely wrong.

The pit in his stomach grows, as he watches Sister Agnes slowly type on the keyboard to find something. What? His records? Something for Techno to fill out? He didn't know. But it seemed normal.

It should be normal.

It can't believe this is happening.

*After the weeks it has spent feasting off the tall boy's misery, with the misery of the religious sister and everyone else in the damned orphanage, in comes some **man** trying to take it all away.*

*Not some **random** man. A man who's been a threat to the King for years. It could smell the magic a mile away, but it wasn't expecting the **man** to take away one of its prey.*

It is supposed to be Prince. It is supposed to rule alongside its King.

*No. No, it will **not** let this get away from it.*

It has a chance. The man doesn't know its here-- the tall boy is picking up on it. It notices the way the boy shudders just like the boy did that one day, moons ago, in the outside world with the other two boys it had been stalking. But the tall boy doesn't make any moves-- he doesn't remember what it was like to face down a dreamon. It doesn't remember why the feeling is there.

Good.

All the more to take it by surprise--

Ranboo keeps his eyes locked forward. He doesn't want to look anywhere-- maybe, if he doesn't focus on anything, the time will go by quickly, and he won't have to be in the quiet,

empty room much longer.

Techno keeps trying to strike up conversation as Sister Agnes sifts through papers, but nothing is working. It's awkward, and even though Techno doesn't literally stumble over his words, keeps up the posh voice, and tries to not let it bother him, Ranboo can tell that Techno is wearing thin, too.

He keeps his eyes locked forward. Looking for anything that resembles a shadow on Sister Agnes.

And, it does come. Not in the way Ranboo ever would expect, or want. It flickers in the corner of his eye, a little bit of shadow, growing on the desk. Maybe he had been seeing things. Maybe he had just imagined, out of complete stress, that Sister Agnes didn't have a shadow.

Stress upon disbelief of his current situation, mixed with everything he's been through within the last few weeks.

Sister Anne's cross is ice-cold on his skin when he sees the shadow scatter again, and the voice in his head tells him to *RUN*.

The elder sister stops in her reading, putting a hand to her head, leaning into it. She looked more tired than Ranboo has *ever* seen her, as if years had suddenly aged onto her all at once. "My apologies, Mr. Billiam, my head has started to spin a lot..."

"Oh, no, you're fine." He can't tell if the sincerity in Techno's voice is real or not. But does it matter? Probably not. "Do you need anything?"

"I'm fine, I just..." Her arms are shaking. Her whole body is shaking. "Need... a moment..."

And she promptly faints on her desk with a *thud*.

The shadow returns. But this time the shadow has eyes. And it grows-- it grows up from the collapsed nun, taller and taller, becoming more lucid and more *real* before their very eyes.

The eyes. Ranboo might be blind to faces, *but he remembers the eyes of a dreamon very well*.

It doesn't have a strict form-- the one before had become a strange bear-like creature from a small squirrel, but this one doesn't form itself into anything except something he would imagine a nightmare would be made out of.

Techno stands up from his chair so suddenly that he knocks it over, and Ranboo follows (though, he doesn't knock over his chair). The older man steps in front of him.

"I should've seen this coming." Techno sighs. "No wonder this place stinks."

Ranboo would hope not *literally*, because he had spent a good hour today trying to clean it up for the man, back when he was sure how the rest of his day was going to go-- watching

another kid find their loving family that God intended, going back to the usual cycle he's been tormented with for the past few weeks.

Techno reached for one of his pockets, pulling out what looked to be another pendant with an amaryllis on it, like the one that Tommy had used what felt like so long ago. *It blinded him, why would Techno use that, nothing makes sense--* but it doesn't glow a bright, blinding white like the last one did.

Well, it did glow, but this time, it was not as intense, and had a bit of a pink hue to it. Techno swung it around his wrist and it glowed, changing shape and size, until a shortsword formed.

Oh. “Um, did that necklace just change into a sword?” Ranboo asks before he can stop and think about how *dumb* of a question that is.

“Yep.”

And the dreamon lunged. Techno pushed Ranboo back, catching the clawed attack from the monster with the side of his sword with ease.

“Ranboo,” Techno pushes forward with his sword, digging his heels into the ground. Any normal person would have had to use extraordinary force with that sort of attack and creature, but it doesn't look like he breaks out into a sweat as he pushes the creature back. “Get back and close your eyes. This isn't going to be pretty.”

Ranboo nods, slowly backing away until his body hits the wall, and he looks away.

Something screamed. Loudly, painfully, a cacophonous screech that would burn into Ranboo's ears. There was a light, too, but he didn't want to look.

He's-- he's only seen Sister Anne die. Her death was sudden, quiet, but just as painful. She didn't make any noise as she took her final breath.

But this thing? This thing *cried*, it clawed its way to Ranboo's brain as it released its final breaths. It was a painful death, but it was quick, too.

Luckily.

For either the dreamon or Ranboo? He didn't know.

The white light faded, and Ranboo dared to open an eye.

Techno puts the sword-pendant thing back into his pocket, and turns to Ranboo. There isn't a scratch on his face, and the empty room looks just as barren and empty as it had before. It's as if nothing had just happened, except maybe Techno getting up too quickly from his chair and knocking it over.

“What just happened.” Ranboo doesn't ask it very well-- it comes out more as a statement.

Techno runs a hand through his hair, fixing it. “I just saved your life. You're welcome.” He grabs the chair with his foot and pulls it back up like that because he's *cool*, or something.

He blinks at Ranboo's facial expression-- Ranboo wasn't sure, but it was probably a mix of shock and confusion. "Well, you've seemed to have a bit of a dreamon problem for who knows how long, I took care of it for you."

"T-thanks. I guess." He walks back over to the desk slowly, tilting his head at Sister Agnes. "Um, is she going to be okay?"

Techno nods, sitting back in his seat. "Yeah, she'll be fine-- probably wake up any second now." He waves it off, as if fighting monsters was *casual* to him. Which, with what Ranboo had been witness too-- not with his sight, but with every sound he'd heard just a few seconds ago-- it probably was. "Dreamons might occasionally eat human flesh, but it's incredibly rare. They like to feed on human misery, instead-- and the more they feed, the more they can create. They can hook onto people, usually one or two, and just endlessly create misery to survive."

"Oh." Ranboo nods. Sister Agnes looks like she's sleeping peacefully. She's breathing, though-- that's good. He nervously goes back to sit down in his seat. "So we wait now?"

Techno held up three fingers. *Two. One.*

Sister Agnes jolts back up. She looks less tired than she had before-- it still weighed on her, it seemed, but it looks like some big weight had been taken off her chest. Something had been freed-- *how long? How long had Ranboo been living with a dreamon, how long had he not noticed?*

Now that he takes a second to think about it, his chest feels a little lighter, too. Not just from the adrenaline of another dreamon encounter, but it feels like something has been lifted off his chest as well. *Had it been feeding off him, too?*

"Ah, I'm sorry. Was I spacing out for a moment?" Sister Agnes' voice is a little lighter now.

Techno nods, playing around. "I believe you were looking for Ranboo's medical records!" He says, without hesitation.

Sister Agnes nods. "Right, thank you." She pulls out a few files. "Well, do you have the papers with you as well, sir? All you need to do is give me those, sign a few things, and it's all done."

And the realization was allowed to settle in, this time. More than it had before, it felt-- maybe, hearing the word *done* helps it settle in more, maybe, the weight on his chest that he didn't know was a big problem being gone left more room for it, but it hit him.

Ranboo-- the tall, kind but awkward teenage orphan, with a few medical issues, a sleepwalking problem-- was going to be adopted.

Techno had come prepared, and had dipped out only briefly before bringing a suitcase so Ranboo could go up to his room and take the things he wanted to with him. The final papers

were signed, everything was done, a rather thick wad of money was pushed in an envelope over the desk when Ranboo was pretending to not look-- it was done.

It was finished. He was adopted.

The suitcase was smart, he decided, even though one of the wheels wasn't rolling properly as he pulled it through the hallway. He had seen younger kids shove their belongings into trash bags and whatever they could find in their rooms because no parent had come prepared enough to adopt a kid and give them something to put their meager belongings in before leaving.

He never imagined to be one of those kids, trying to figure out how to pack up their things excitedly, giving everyone a last goodbye hug, to be whisked away for a new life. Well, he did when he was younger-- not anymore. Not recently.

Yet here he was, in that exact scenario.

Because he was alone in his room, it was rather easy to decide what to take. He could hear a few kids peering in through the cracked-open door he left behind him as he looked at what he owned.

Other than school things-- not much.

He definitely threw the few stuffed animals he had at the end of his bed into the suitcase first, but of things that belonged to him? Other than clothes, his existence at the orphanage was very minimal. And even then, most of his clothes were hand-me-downs, clothes that were lovingly repaired and mended before being tossed.

Ranboo takes the clothes. He's only got a few pairs of jeans, polo shirts, plain t-shirts, and his church clothes. It's not much, but it's *his*, it's one of the few things he considers to be *his*, so he takes them and folds them neatly

He gets to his desk, and stops. There's a few papers cluttered over it, ditched after he heard Sister Marie yelling for the children to help clean as fast as they can, get downstairs. He was looking through his old journals, looking at the pages he had written loosely and shoved into backs of books because he still hadn't gotten a new notebook to write his thoughts in, he didn't know when he would get a new one--

Sitting on top of his desk is the scrap from his old journal.

Magic.

He grabs it tenderly and sighs. He never could have imagined that something as small as running into two boys at the park over the summer could change his life as significantly as this had.

A knock on his door pulls him through his thoughts, instincts kick in and he shoves the little piece of paper-- what remains-- back into his pocket and turns around quickly.

Sister Agnes stands at his door-- leans against it, more or less. His memories decide it's good to remind him of the last time she had been standing at his door, green notebook in hand, but this time.

This time, it's different.

For one, she doesn't have his journal-- or anything to hold over him. Her hands are respectfully held together. Her face is softer. Solemn. She still looks tired, like she could close her eyes and collapse at any moment again, but she stands in his doorframe as the sounds of quick footsteps echo down the hall.

"I will admit, I never thought I would see the day that you would be leaving, Ranboo." She says. She doesn't step closer into his room. She stands still-- leans, still? She's leaning slightly on his doorframe. "It makes my heart happy that you may have finally found your home, and your family."

"I'm happy, too." Ranboo says. He awkwardly stands at his desk chair. He tries to push the memories back. It doesn't work.

"That's good." Sister Agnes gives him a smile. It's forced, it's strained-- she's tired. She's very tired, how had Ranboo not paid attention to it before? "I... I will admit, I feel like these past few weeks I've been lost in a fog. I don't remember a lot of things, exactly-- I'm sure you would understand."

Ranboo nervously laughs, nodding.

"...But I think. I think I may have hurt you, and my other sisters, and the other children during this fog." She takes a shaky breath. "And I'm sorry. Grief does a lot of awful things to people. I don't think I was entirely myself. And I hurt you. And I'm sorry."

Oh.

Ranboo feels tears burn in his eyes, but he rubs them away quickly. He can't see her face, he can't make out the detail, but he can tell, just like he's taught himself how to, he can tell that Sister Agnes is *really apologising*.

She's sorry. Ranboo should forgive her-- that's what the Bible says he should do.

But. He doesn't feel *ready*. He had his memories burned away from his mind. A few things stayed, but a good portion of the last few months were just gone. He's had to endure a lot more work on top of everything else. He's had his first friends torn away from him. Ranboo had been through a lot.

"I don't come asking for forgiveness, of course." She gives him a smile-- a shaky, broken, forced, strained smile. "That's the thing about when people hurt you. Even though God says you should always forgive, he doesn't tell you to forgive immediately. I can only hope that you can, one day, forgive me for what I did."

Ranboo nods. His mouth is incredibly dry. "Not now," he admits. "Not today. But one day."

Sister Agnes nods, taking a deep breath. “Thank you, Ranboo. Sister Anne would be so incredibly proud of you, if she was still here today. I meant what I said back then.”

Hm? Ranboo-- he doesn't remember.

“You're incredibly strong, and brave, even if you don't think you are.”

His hand goes up to the cross around his neck. He pulled it out from under his shirt to tug on gently, to help him think as he looked through what he really wanted to take and keep with him, a habit he's gotten into instead of picking at the skin around his nails or the fraying hems of his shirts. It feels warm.

He doesn't remember the last time he felt warm. He watches Sister Agnes nod to him and leave, leaving the door cracked as it had been behind her.

He doesn't remember the last time he felt warm.

But it was nice.

It was strange to see the orphanage in the rearview mirror as Techno drove him away from it the last time. It's bittersweet, his fingers gently rub over the golden cross around his neck and it feels like a few tears might leak their way out of his eyes.

It felt like he was trapped, for so long, but he would miss the place. Miss the memories, maybe.

His melancholy thoughts are broken by Techno grunting, loudly.

“Finally, I thought that was going to take *forever*. ” He adjusts the rearview mirror, not paying attention to the road and messing with his hair. “Can't wait to get back home and fix my hair back.”

Ranboo lets out the small, airy laugh that one gets for a second. “You dyed your hair to do this?”

“Eh, kinda. It's a quick fix, but I still don't like it.” Techno says, fixing the rearview mirror again.

A beat of silence.

“Those papers were fake, weren't they?” Ranboo asks, the thought coming into his mind immediately and coming out immediately.

“Yep.” Techno says.

“How did you do that?”

“Well, Ranboo, when you've lived as long as I have, you meet a few people here and there who know how to get away with stuff like that.”

"... Wait, how old are you? You barely look twenty!"

Techno gives him a smirk, and says nothing else.

Chapter End Notes

Well I was not expecting to take a break from writing and see the entirety of the DreamSMP fandom broken over a 30-minute livestream. Welcome to March, I guess.

ANYWAY. Here's the thing about Sister Agnes and her "Dreamon" possession. Dreamons in this lore don't full-out possess someone-- when they feed on grief and misery and all the bad, ugly feelings we have, it makes more and gives them more to feed off, creating an endless cycle. They latch onto people, and they make maybe hidden desires, those impulsive, intrusive thoughts and ideas into our heads a reality sometimes. Not saying that every bad person has a dreamon possession, or people who have intrusive thoughts are all possessed by dreamons, but it's just a side effect that can happen. So Sister Agnes doesn't remember *exactly* what she did to Ranboo for the past few weeks. But she knows she did bad things, and she wanted to apologize.

Here's the other thing-- in my experience, you're taught to forgive when people apologize. Even if they hurt you badly, forgiveness > anything else. But maybe it's me inching in a bit of my own philosophy into Sister Agnes so she's not the Big Bad Evil Lady, but Ranboo doesn't *have* to forgive her. I don't *have* to forgive people who hurt me, and neither should anyone else. Good distinction to make.

Emotional angst aside, badass Techno confirmed. The last little bit I have been waiting for to write for days :) So glad that I'm getting into the upswing now. Or, well. Kinda. It's gonna be up and down for a while, but it's definitely going to get out of all the Ranboo Angst(TM) that y'all have been suffering with since the beginning for a while, at least.

After all, there's still a lot of unanswered questions, isn't there?

:)

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Guess This Is My Home Now. As Tommy Would Say, "Pog".

Chapter Summary

WHOOPS ALMOST FORGOT TO SHARE WITH Y'ALL THE AMAZING FANART!!!

[HERE'S A PIECE BY INKRAKEN ON TUMBLR!! LOOK HOW COOL THE DREAMON IS!!](#)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Home.

It's a strange, four-letter word to Ranboo. For all that he could remember, after all, he had no home that he could speak of. He was abandoned at four years old and his family before that, his home before that, long forgotten, as if they were wiped away by the rain he stood in on the front porch of the orphanage.

And maybe, for a little bit, the orphanage was his home. The church was his home, too-- both will always be a part of him. He might forget the little details, but he has some of his journals left, some of his memories kept intact. It never really felt like *home*, but it was food, it was shelter, it was warm blankets and sunny summer afternoons playing outside and December nights leaving out his shoes for Saint Nicholas day and counting down the days of Lent and Fridays without meat before Easter. The orphanage was a lot of things-- but never, permanently, his home.

It was meant to be temporary. Ranboo was only meant to be there for a little while, until a family adopted him-- or, the worst-case scenario, he hit eighteen and became an adult.

The orphanage was also the place where he would be locked in his room every night to prevent sleepwalking himself into danger. It was the place that kept him sheltered for most of his life. It was the place-- it was not a place of all happy memories.

Unfortunate, that his memory loss would affect those happier memories more than the sadder ones.

But *home* is something Ranboo would never expect to feel in a place. Maybe, one day, long down the road, when he settles into a house and has his own family, or whatever God has planned for him, he would finally feel at *home*. At home, at peace, somewhere, one day. Never anytime soon.

Not now.

He'd given up hope of ever being adopted. He'd given up hope of having a family, of having a home, until he built it all up for himself in the future.

But life has a funny way of turning out okay, sometimes, Ranboo thinks, as Techno pulls the small, yellow car into the driveway of Tommy's-- of Phil's-- of *Ranboo's* home.

It was an instant feeling-- not one that he could describe very well. But it was *his home*, his new home, he had a home, *a home*.

He'd been to this house a few times over the summer after the attack by the dreamon, but his memory always left out the details. It was a lot bigger than it seemed, stretching back further and into an orchard sprawling through a good acre or so. Tommy's room was one of the windows on the second floor that could see the orchard very well. The furniture is all odd, mis-matched, colorful and tacky but in the best way possible.

He takes a deep breath as Techno opens the front door.

"AYY, RANBOO!" Tommy's loud-- as he usually is-- and is quite a force to be reckoned with, even with his magic, and he slams immediately into Ranboo and hugs him.

It nearly knocks Ranboo over. If he didn't have a good bit of height over Tommy, maybe it would have, but Ranboo catches himself and awkwardly returns the hug.

Phil's nearby, and so is Tommy's other brother-- well, it would be Ranboo's brother now, right?

Well. He hadn't had a chance to think that new fact over. He has-- Ranboo has *three* brothers, now. Not just a mom and a dad, not just a single parent, but a bigger family then he could have ever *dreamed*.

Other-brother-- *Wilbur*, Ranboo put two-and-two together quickly when Techno mentioned something about Wilbur and it rang a bell in Ranboo's head, he can't believe how *awful* he is with names and memories-- smirks, leaning against the stair railing, and Phil lets out a light chuckle.

"You have no fuckin' idea how upset Tubbo is that he couldn't be here for this!" Tommy says, backing out of the hug. He's bouncing around a lot, and the way he moves, Ranboo can tell that he's using his magic. His jump is a little bit higher, his hair is windswept through everything. "It's so good to see you, man."

"It's-- it's good to see you, too." Ranboo sighs. He feels tears threatening to come out, and wipes them away quickly. "I certainly wasn't expecting, well... Any of this."

"Phil sees a kid in need, he can't resist helping." Techno comments, monotone, as he walks down the hall, away from the tearful reunion. "Hey, Phil, you got something cooking?"

"Just a bit of dinner." Phil turns his head to respond. He looks back at Ranboo. "You don't have any allergies, or anything, right? Or dietary stuff?"

Ranboo shook his head. "No-- not that I'm, um, aware of."

"Cool. Hope you like some meatloaf, then." He says. His smile is wide, wider than Ranboo has ever seen on anyone (other than Tommy, probably). Phil lets out a bit of a shaky sigh. "Welcome home, Ranboo."

Oh, yeah. Now the tears are falling, but he doesn't do much but try and fail to wipe them off his cheeks. Phil approaches slowly, before wrapping Ranboo up in a big hug.

It's warm. The house smells like something is cooking-- not burning, but cooking, a pleasant mixture of spices and something warm-- and there's laughter. It's bright.

Ranboo is home.

"And this is your room!" Tommy had elected to be the official Tour Guide for Ranboo, while Phil and Techno finished dinner. Wilbur joined, too, and made the occasional joke.

He knew where the bathroom was, on the second floor. He also knew where Tommy's room was (one he remembered, with the metal lofted bed and large desktop computer and fun LED lights lined up on the wall), he had seen a peek of Wilbur's room, at the insistence of Tommy (it was cozy and warm, with a guitar and a ukulele and a piano all pushed to one side of the room, and a simple bed and dresser in the other), and the doors to Phil and Techno's rooms, on the other end of the hall.

Tommy opens the door and swings his hands wildly in the air.

The room is simple. It's a dark blue color, with one of the walls an exposed brick. There's a closet on one wall, with doors that look like they slide open. The bed is bigger than what Ranboo used to have-- twice as big as his old twin, at *least* -- and it has plain gray sheets on it. The wood of the nightstands and dresser are both dark, and there's a window to the orchard, just like Tommy has.

They're room-neighbors. It's the door right next to Tommy's.

"It used to be the guest bedroom, that's why it's plain." Wilbur explains, following them in. "But we don't get guests who need the second-floor guest room, anyway."

Ah. That explains it.

"Phil says he's gonna take you out this week to go shopping for clothes n' stuff." Tommy flops on the bed, and it bounces a bit under his weight. He seems to read Ranboo's face well. "Suck it up, bitch, you're a part of the family now, Phil's gonna let you go crazy on the room."

Crazy?

"I mean, nothing can be crazier than what Tommy first suggested, so I'd say anything can go." Wilbur snips in. Ranboo glances at him. "He wanted a treehouse in his room."

“Fuck off! I like to sleep high up, alright?” Tommy huffs, crossing his arms. “A loft bed is pretty close.” He mumbles.

Wilbur rolls his eyes. “Well, dinner will probably be another five minutes, so you have time to unpack.” He says. He eyes Tommy. “C’mon Tommy, let’s give Ranboo time to unpack.”

Tommy nods. “If you need anything, just come knockin’! Either on my door or on the wall.” He gives him a quick finger-guns, and before Ranboo knows it, the door shuts behind him, and he’s standing in the room alone.

His room.

The suitcase of all his belongings feel incredibly small compared to what he has before him. It’s probably close to the same size as his old room-- maybe a little bigger, but it feels about the same size, especially with the bigger bed in it. There’s a few empty spaces in the room, too-- where he would assume a desk could go. Maybe a bookshelf.

Ranboo lifts the suitcase onto the bed and zips it open. His clothes and his belongings are all folded up comfortably and neatly inside. A quick check to the closet shows he doesn’t have any hangers-- fine, he has a dresser that will hold most of his clothes, at least, and he can reorganize later.

He stops in his thoughts. It’s his room. *His* room. The bed is his bed, the dresser is *his* dresser, the window is his window, the closet is his-- he feels a little pang of guilt in his heart, looking at all the things that are suddenly *his*. But he can’t help but feel a little excited.

The furniture at the orphanage always felt like... a loan. Like it was given to him, but it wasn’t *his* in the way that his clothes could be his or his journals were his. It was old furniture with scuffed paint donated by members of the church to *orphans in need*, all of it had wear and tear to them. His desk chair wobbled if he leaned too far back into it, they had to get the gardener to help saw the legs of his dresser to be more even when it arrived. The bed was just dragged from one of the boy’s rooms-- it was a little bigger, of course, but nothing special, still a twin bed like he’d slept in for most of his life.

But now things are *his*, and it’s a little exciting to think about. And-- he can do with his room whatever he wants to do.

All this power, all this control, is so frighteningly *new* to him.

But he’s so excited for it.

The stuffed animals that he’s kept through his childhood fit comfortably on top of the dresser, and his journals and loose pieces of paper fit next to them. The bible he’s had for years goes on his nightstand without a second thought, but the last thing in his suitcase is the wooden rosary.

The wooden rosary Sister Agnes gave him that first time, over the summer, when he had gotten in trouble. The grains in the wood are familiar to Ranboo, and it has carved its own way into his palms. He picks it up gingerly, and sets it on top of the bible next to his bed.

Ranboo takes a shaky breath. He-- well, he hasn't thought about *church* yet. Most of his new family (weird to think about, Ranboo pushes those complicated feelings down) seems pretty.... Non-religious. What was Ranboo supposed to do? There was no instruction. Nothing to tell him what to do-- the nuns had been convinced that the man who adopted Ranboo, *Billiam*, was a religious man, because who would go to a religious orphanage to adopt a child if they were not at least a little religious themselves?

It was still a Tuesday. He had time until Sunday to deal with those complicated feelings.

Plus, dinner was ready. He heard the echo through the house-- *how could Phil yell that loud?* -- and heard Tommy hit the floor in the room next to him. Hopefully he had just jumped from his lofted bed.

Hopefully.

The dinner table is just as lop-sided as Ranboo remembers it his first time. There's an extra chair on one side, and Ranboo assumes it's for him. Everyone goes to the counter to get their fair share of dinner, and he can't help but marvel at the smell of dinner.

He didn't think he'd be a fan of meatloaf, but what Phil made looked and smelled *divine*. Glancing at the plates, too, it seems like they're just as mis-matched as all the other things in this house. Tommy has a teal green plate, while Wibur grabs one that is a mustard color and has a bit more of a bowl shape to it. The silverware doesn't match. Phil's drinking something out of a mug that looks handmade, while Techno looks like he's drinking *water* from a *wine glass*.

Well, this is just what Ranboo has to get used to now, he thinks.

There's no prayer before the meal, because when Tommy sits down he immediately digs into dinner. Ranboo hesitates, throws out a quick mental prayer-- *Thank you God for this food*-- before he takes a bite of the food that's been making his stomach growl for the past five minutes.

And it's good.

It's so good.

"You like it, Ranboo?" Phil asks. He's looking through files-- by the looks of it, Ranboo's files from the orphanage that Techno had gotten just earlier that day. Seeing them, sitting in the dining room like this, nothing felt *real* yet to him.

He nods. "Y-yes, it's very good. Thank you."

Ranboo gets a small smile in return, and there's a beat of silence.

And then Techno speaks up.

"There was a dreamon at the orphanage."

Tommy chokes on his food, Wilbur stops in his tracks, and Phil glances up from looking at the files, taking a sip from his mug.

Tommy leans back in his chair, desperately coughing on the bits of meatloaf that he was choking on. Ranboo tries to hit his back as gently as possible to dislodge it.

“You-- can’t just fucking *drop* that out of nowhere!”

“When else would you want to hear about it?” Techno retorts, throwing his hands up. “I thought the deal was to let you know when something happened, and, well, something *happened.*”

Deal? Ranboo wonders, as Tommy finally stops choking on the bits of meatloaf and Phil pinches the bridge of his nose. The thought goes away just as quickly, when Phil speaks.

“You’ve got a point,” Wilbur says, poking at the meatloaf again and casually taking a bite of it. He doesn’t seem too bothered by anything, really-- Ranboo can’t help but feel a little jealous. He would love to be unbothered like that.

“Anyway, as I was about to explain before I was *rudely* interrupted...” Techno glares daggers at Tommy, who sticks up his middle finger as a response. Ranboo tries harder to focus on his food, but, he knows deep down inside that this is the life he is going to have now.

-- Hm. That’s a *thought*, and it hits him like everything else has been hitting him. But perhaps he’ll just sneak a cry later when he goes to bed and he’s sure everyone is asleep, like he usually does.

“...There was a dreamon at the orphanage. It was decently strong, for one that young, but pretty easy to take care of. It had latched onto... Um.” Techno glances at Ranboo.

“Sister Agnes,” he supplies. “She’s the, um. Head caregiver, I guess you can say.”

“Yes, her.” Techno turns back, mostly focusing on Phil. He seems to be taking in the story as he’s looking through Ranboo’s files. Multitasking. *Is that his magic?* Ranboo wonders.

He doesn’t know anyone else’s magic-- he’s sure, he would at least *remember* something about it. Tommy’s magic was forgotten, but seeing it work in person again jogged Ranboo’s memory, that night they tried to break him out. But he knew it had to do something with wind, or something, and Tubbo-- well, it was something about being incredibly strong, he thinks. The details are muddy and foggy, but if he focuses, he can remember something.

But he doesn’t remember anything else about-- well, anyone else at the table. He hadn’t been around Wilbur or Techno for too long for him to learn about them, and no one had ever said anything worth remembering.

He’ll find out, he supposes.

Eventually.

"... Looks like it had been hanging on for a few weeks, at most." Techno adds, bringing Ranboo back to the conversation. The pink-haired man shrugs, returning to his dinner. "Maybe a month or two, if it's been hunting. It's gone now, so the orphanage is safe, I suppose."

A few weeks. Ranboo's hand instinctively goes up to the golden cross around his neck. Had it - had it been waiting? Had it been waiting for something bad to happen, and when Sister Anne.... Did it attack then?

It.

Well, it explains *a lot*. Of why Sister Agnes got progressively harsher. She wasn't in complete control. She was acting on bad thoughts, of course, the bad thoughts one gets that one pushes back into their mind as if they never happened, the ones they don't talk about. But since Sister Anne?

How long had Ranboo been blind to it?

"Anyway, change of topic." Phil suddenly clears his throat. It makes Ranboo jump. Phil turns his head to Ranboo. "I'm sure someone already told you, but since you're now a part of the family, I want to make sure you feel at home, yeah? So whenever you want to this week, we'll take you out to get some stuff for your room, and maybe some more clothes."

Ranboo nods. "S-sounds good."

Phil gives him a smile. It's a warm smile. It's a smile that *feels* like home.

They finish dinner soon after that, and Tommy and Wilbur argue while rinsing off dishes. It seems Ranboo isn't expected to help out with any chores, until he gets settled-- which, he doesn't mind. A few weeks of overloading chores made him exhausted, and so much had happened in the day alone that he would probably forget what he was doing mid-action and drop and break a plate.

Probably.

It happened before. He tries to focus when he's helping clean, but his head gets full and he forgets what he's doing, sometimes. At least with plates, he can pretend it just slips out of his hand. It can be an accident.

The sun has set. It makes Ranboo nervous, ever more so. Not only is it the first time he's slept in a different *building* than the orphanage-- he's never gone on the youth trips with the church, he's never felt accepted by the other teens in that small group and didn't mind-- but it's nighttime. Which means sleeping.

Which means sleepwalking.

Phil seems to pick up on that anxiety almost immediately. *Maybe it's his magic?* Ranboo wonders, as Phil rests his hands on Ranboo's shoulder when he's trying to distract himself by looking at some of the photos on the wall.

He sees Tommy and Wilbur grow up. Baby Tommy had an incredibly big head, and it looks like Wilbur has always had the mess of curly hair. It doesn't seem like Phil ages, much, and there aren't any family photos with Technoblade in them.

"You doing okay, Ranboo?" Phil asks.

There's something that tells Ranboo to *lie, to hide*, to bury it down. But he doesn't.

"Not really."

"Anything I can do to help?"

Ranboo shrugs. "I don't suppose, um, the bedroom doors lock from the other side, do they?"

There is a brief second, when Phil looks down at Ranboo, and his face is... incredulous. Incredulously horrified, if that would be possible. Or maybe just a look of concerned, confused shock. It's gone quickly, but the expression burns into his memories. It's not like the other concerned looks he's sent Tommy or Tubbo or even Ranboo (that he can remember), it's something else entirely.

Why?

"Ah, no, I don't think so." Phil says. "Is it about your sleepwalking?"

Ranboo nods. He knows how Phil knows. Either Tommy talked about it-- Ranboo remembers the day after he was grounded pretty well, he remembers talking to his two friends about why the grounding happened-- or Phil read it in his files, or Techno mentioned it when they were making dinner. Either way, he knows that the older man found out *somewhere*.

He waits for the quick solution. *They'll put something in front of the door, so I can't get out of my room. They'll find a way to magically lock it, maybe. They'll find a way.*

Phil shrugs.

"Well... I'm a pretty light sleeper, Wil always stays up till, like, four in the morning, and Techno doesn't really sleep, so you've got a few people in the house who will probably catch you up, and we'll just get you back to your room or something."

Oh. That's not what Ranboo expected.

"I mean, unless you would feel more comfortable... with something in front of your door?" Phil quirks an eyebrow, but his face isn't curious. It's the concerned look. It's strange that Ranboo is able to remember that look so well.

And it's strange that he's... being given a choice.

"I... I don't know." He says. He glances back up at the photos. *Will I ever be in a photo on this wall, too?* "My room back at the orphanage--" He lowers his voice on *orphanage*, it's still strange to say aloud. "--it locked from the outside, and my, um. Caregivers would lock it when they went to bed."

He's incredibly lucky he's never had to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night. He's *incredibly lucky* he's never had to deal with that.

Phil nods. Ranboo doesn't see his face, but it's probably still got the same concern on his face.

"They were heavy sleepers, and I got outside a few times, so it was really the only option." *Especially since I haven't been taken to any doctor about this, at all...* Ranboo adds mentally, but he doesn't say it aloud. His hand goes up to the chain on his neck, and he tugs at it. "But. Um. If there's gonna be people awake, I guess... I guess I'll be okay?"

Phil nods. He squeezes Ranboo's shoulder. It's a bit of an awkward squeeze.

"Alright, mate, I'll tell you what." He glances back towards the living room. Techno is reading a book in it, by the golden light of an antique lamp. "If you end up getting out somehow, we'll find a way to get your door locked at night to keep you safe. But for now, someone will most likely be up to catch you, so we'll leave it unlocked. Sound good?"

Ranboo nods.

It does sound good. It was what it was like when the problem started-- minus someone catching him, of course, since all the Sisters were heavy sleepers. But if-- if his new family really had awful sleeping schedules, if he was found sleepwalking, they could just guide him back to his room. Or somewhere to lay down, really. Stop him from sleepwalking. Keep him safe, without locking the door.

When he goes to bed that night he prays to God that it'll stay that way for a little bit.

Chapter End Notes

IT'S DONE IT'S DONE IT'S *DONE*

Hi friends! I've missed you. It's been a good week or so, hasn't it? To put it simply, midterms suck. This chapter was a bit of a rough one, too, but I got through it! These next few chapters will probably satisfy the domestic family dynamics y'all have been waiting for B)

Good luck in the guesses for everyone's magic. A few people have gotten Techno right, but I don't know if you guys will get Wilbur's or Phil's right until they're revealed. All will come in due time for that, of course... :)

Also Phil PLEASE take Ranboo to a sleep doctor now that you've got custody of him, PLEASE. Yeah, this is me, begging my own story, since I hardly have any creative control except for a few things whenever the spirit of this story possesses me to write. Hopefully it happens, even if it's off-screen.

I hope everyone here had a wonderful February, and we're about to have an amazing March, I just know it! :D See you guys in the next chapter which hopefully won't take this long but who knows ahahaha

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Mostly Fluffy Filler, But I Think We All Need This

Chapter Notes

lol hope you guys have a few snacks this chapter is a lil' longer than the rest

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It's when he realizes that his neck is cramped up and awkwardly angled that he slowly begins to wake up. It's stiff, and it definitely doesn't feel like he's on his bed anymore.

The sound of a bird-- a mourning dove, he recognizes, somehow-- also stirs him awake. He opens his eyes and.

He's not in his bedroom.

Not even in the orphanage-- everything the day before had felt like a dream, no matter how many times he pinched himself and tried to ground himself, it was still *real* and *not a dream*. Which was nice, for once, especially after the bizarre dream he had a week ago.

But it wasn't even the *new* bedroom he had, at his new house, with his new family.

No, he was awkwardly laying on the couch in the living room.

Early-morning sunlight gently cuts through the windows, sending golden rays to the ground. The couch is just too small for him to be lying on, but his legs are tucked up and his head is awkwardly laying atop a throw pillow, and there's a soft blanket thrown over his body.

Ah.

He must've-- he must've sleepwalked, again. But this time he didn't end up waking up outside in the morning dew, or somewhere awkward, like the bathtub, or end up hurting himself. This time, he had been guided-- he assumed-- to lay down somewhere else.

He wonders who did it.

He sits up too quickly. There's a sore feeling in his neck, most definitely from the pillow on the couch he was just a little too tall to be sleeping on. Massaging it gently makes it a little less intense, but he'll probably notice it irritated throughout the morning.

He stretches his arms. They pop a little bit as he does so, but it feels a little better. It helps wake him up a bit more. No one else is in the living room, but he hears someone in the kitchen, and Ranboo awkwardly stands to follow the noise.

"Good morning, Ranboo." Phil greets him. He's got a cup of coffee in one hand, and he's *still* looking through some paperwork from the orphanage. Sister Agnes was very detail-oriented, it seems. "Sleep well?"

He shrugs, a bit. The rest of the house is quiet. It *is* a Wednesday-- Tommy and Wilbur were probably at school, he assumes. It was eight. "I guess. I sleepwalked, though."

Phil nods. "Wil said he found you staring at the pantry at about two this morning."

Ranboo wonders why he would go to the pantry first-thing, but he wonders a lot of things. Like, *why is there suffering in the world?* And, *if God forgives all sin, why do we have to go to confession?* Especially, *what in the world happens when I sleepwalk?*

Well, the answer seems to be he's hungry. It's about the time the orphanage would have breakfast together, after all, but he doesn't know how it works at his new home yet.

"Feel free to make yourself whatever," Phil adds. "We've got some cereal, eggs, toast, I can cook up some bacon or sausages if you really want some of those, too."

"Cereal sounds fine." He says. He doesn't want to ask Phil to cook something up if he's already focused on something. Squinting a bit, he can tell it's his school records. Probably incredibly entertaining to read, which is why Phil definitely has the cup of coffee with him.

It's a different mug from last night. This one looks like a frog.

They do have a wide array of cereals, from sugary sweet monstrosities that Ranboo can only imagine Tommy eating, to more boring, stale cereals like raisin bran, which he imagines Technoblade having and he can't help but stifle a chuckle at. There's a box of rice krispies, which as plain as it sounds, is the only option Ranboo can recognize other than the boring ones, so he grabs it and finds a yellow bowl.

They have two kinds of milk, too, apparently. He grabs the two percent. He doesn't know what coconut milk tastes like and he isn't in a particularly daring mood that morning, especially when the little stabbing pain in his neck pops up to remind Ranboo of its existence.

He sits at the chair across from Phil. He doesn't have anything to look at, so he focuses on the back of the rice krispies box, where there's an unfinished word hunt. A few words had been circled in thick sharpie, but it wasn't finished.

Phil speaks up, first.

"What was homeschooling like for you, Ranboo?"

"Oh, um." He pauses. "It was fine, I guess. Sister Agnes says-- said that public school is full of temptations." Ranboo replies.

Phil hums.

"I-- I don't *agree*, with her. Obviously. But it's all I know, so." He takes a breath. "Most of it was on my own, anyway. They would give me work, and I would finish it by the end of the

day.”

“Interesting.” Phil says.

“Why?”

“Just figuring some things out.” He responds. “Tommy and Wilbur are both going to the local high school, but I don’t want to throw you right into it, especially in the middle of the semester. You’re also... behind, in a few subjects.”

That makes Ranboo perk up. He was... he was *behind*? He thought he was ahead, with how much work the nuns would give him. But maybe, in just a single day’s hindsight, it makes a little sense he was a little behind in subjects-- they had control over everything. More emphasis was put on religious history than actual american history, and none of the sisters were particularly big on any of the sciences.

“Ah.”

“Nothing you can’t get caught up with, of course.” Phil adds, glancing up. He pushes some of his loose hair back nervously. Now that Ranboo gets a closer look, the older man has most of his hair pushed out of his face with a headband. “Would you... want to go to public school?”

He’s heard the horror stories-- from the nuns and from his friends. Of bullies and mean teachers and gym class locker rooms and *drugs* and *sex*, and, well. Ranboo isn’t particularly interested in most of that, in all honesty. If he had no other choice, he’d find a way to deal, he thinks, just like everything that’s been thrown at him in life.

His response is a shrug.

“Techno suggested we enroll you in online school until the end of the semester, at least, what do you feel about that? It wouldn’t be too different from what you said homeschooling was like, except I wouldn’t be giving you work, it would be an online teacher. For the most part, too, you can go at whatever pace you need.”

Hm.

That sounded *much* better than public school. For now, at least.

If I’m actually behind, it’s probably better; Ranboo thinks.

Phil grins. He reads Ranboo *too well*. “Alright, well, you’ll probably start sometime later next week then, yeah?”

“Sure.” Fine by him. A bit of a break would be nice. It would be like a mini summer vacation!

Except it’s not summer. And he never got any sort of break for anything, except for Easter and the week of Christmas to New Years.

But it’s like a mini summer vacation, and he’ll take it.

There's a moment of silence, of Phil enjoying his cup of coffee and Ranboo finishing the bowl of cereal, a moment of peace, before Techno walks in through the back door.

For one, he's covered in a considerable amount of blood. Not his own blood, Ranboo can tell. It looks more like what dreamons are made of, except something in Ranboo's brain recognizes it (and the unfortunate putrid smell) as blood. Phil doesn't even blink at it.

"Phil, you won't believe the morning I've had." Techno reaches into the freezer and grabs what looks like a microwaveable breakfast thing, but it's tossed too quickly into the microwave for Ranboo to see exactly what it is.

Techno stops. Looks at Ranboo. "Oh, good morning, Ranboo."

Ranboo nods at him in response, trying to stay considerably calm with the blood-soaked man in front of him. At least it wasn't Techno's blood.

"Anyway." Techno turns back to Phil. "Got a message this morning that a dreamon was spotted near the supermarket from Niki, so I went to go check it out. Turns out it wasn't just one dreamon, it was a bunch of little ones."

"How many?" Phil asks, his eyes widening ever so slightly. He brings the mug up to his mouth to take a sip. He looks deeply invested.

Ranboo is, too, but he looks at the back of the cereal box to not look at the literal blood-covered man standing in the kitchen.

The microwave beeps. Techno opens the microwave and grabs-- oh, it's a hot pocket-- and takes a bite of it without hesitation. He shrugs.

"Lost count at about thirty-two." He wolfs down the hot pocket incredibly fast. Wasn't it supposed to be incredibly hot straight out of the microwave? Ranboo can't help but be in awe. He glances down at his clothes. "Guess I'm doing laundry again."

"I put my sheets in not too long ago, but they should be done soon." Phil says.

Techno groans, and goes into the freezer to grab another hot pocket.

The conversation turns away from the blood-soaked man into the kitchen and back to Ranboo, with just one look towards him. "So, Ranboo, are you up for a little shopping trip today?"

Well, it wasn't like Ranboo has anything else to do. If he's going to have a break before Phil can work out the online-class thing, then what else should he do? Stare at the wall in his room, listen to the music on his phone for a few hours?

"I mean, I don't know what else I'd do today. So, sure."

"Techno, want to join?"

"I'll pass." The pink-haired man said. He was running his fingers through it. The gross dreamon-blood had soaked that, too, but he was careful about making too much of a mess in the kitchen, at least. He sighs. "I'm going to need to take a long bath."

Ranboo has never been to *the mall* before. He's heard it thrown around, of course, by Tommy and Tubbo, over the summer. It was the only mall in an hour's drive near them, and despite the death of shopping centers like it, most stores survived through anything. They could probably survive the apocalypse, or maybe there was a little magical influence. He didn't know.

But it was just a place to go shopping. He'd never been too materialistic, he was thankful for any clothes he got, but sometimes he would see a cool shirt on his walks and wonder if he'd ever be able to buy something that cool instead of wearing hand-me-down polos and t-shirts from the families of his caregivers, since he had grown at an awkward length so quickly.

He feels a little ostracized walking into the mall. Phil is just in a plain t-shirt and jeans, with his hair pulled back out of his face. Ranboo is wearing a faded gray polo, a sweater with sleeves a little too short for him, and jeans that have one-too-many patches in them.

"You didn't come with much, huh?" Phil asks, pulling out his phone. There's a little list on it, of some basics-- *new pants, new shirts, underwear, room decorations?*, but all of the stuff on the list is up in the air.

Ranboo shrugs. He tries to awkwardly dig his hands into his pockets, but it makes him feel even more awkward. "Most of my clothes were, um, hand-me-downs, so."

"Have you ever been shopping?"

Ranboo shakes his head. "Only grocery shopping."

He laughs at that. "Well, this is going to be a long day, huh?"

I'm sorry, Ranboo wants to say, but the tone of Phil's voice tells him *it's okay, I'm ready*, which is a nice change of pace from the impatient tones of the sisters back at the orphanage.

The mall is big, and has a lot more people than he would expect on a school day. Maybe some of the teens were ditching, skipping class, for whatever reason, but most were families, shopping last-minute Columbus Day sales.

There are a lot of stores, the giant building has three stories, and Ranboo wouldn't even know where to start. The mannequins in the store window seem a little too intimidating, styles he could never imagine emulating in his life, other things catching his eye or two.

The shopping was really the background, though, the action of the day. What Ranboo really remembers more is how Phil filled up the awkward silence between them.

"So, what do you like to do in your free time, Ranboo?" Phil asks, as Ranboo looks through a rack of shirts at one random teen fashion store. He wasn't particularly interested in anything,

but there was a hoodie in the window that he liked a lot, and he might as well try and find something else to go with the hoodie.

(The hoodie had spines on the arm and a cartoon dinosaur on it. One that he could never get while at the orphanage, but Phil caught him staring and dragged him into the store.)

“Um, read, I guess.” He replies. The memories of him sneaking books in the library come back to mind. “I, um. Couldn’t read much because my caregivers monitored everything we had, but I would sneak in a few pages of books when we went to the library and write the page number down on my hand, so I could come back to them later.”

Phil laughs.

It’s not as heart as the one before. It’s a little... sadder, if that was a proper word to use.

“Smart kid.” He says. “Beating the system, huh?”

“I... I guess.” He didn’t do it to rebel on purpose. He just wanted to read *The Hunger Games* (which, he realizes, he forgot what page he was on and he never finished it) and other books the nuns would never have let him have because they seemed so *interesting* and tantalizing. And maybe it was a little bit of rebellion. Of what he could do.

They move onto another clothing store, only leaving the first one with the hoodie and a pair of black jeans that Ranboo liked a lot.

“I’m sure you’ve already figured this out by now, but.” Phil says, breaking the silence again, as they look through more plain clothes at a different store. It’s the men’s section this time, not a teen store, but there’s a bit of summer style on clearance and some of the brightly patterned, gaudy button-ups are incredibly tempting to Ranboo. “I’m thinking you might have a magical gift, too.”

“I... Yeah. You aren’t subtle about that.” Ranboo gives him a small smile. “What... Why do you think that? Also-- can we even talk about this in public?”

“No one ever pays attention to what you talk about in public, Ranboo.” Phil shrugs. “And, well. Most people with magical gifts, like our family and the community... There’s some sort of emotional aspect to it, I don’t know if I can explain it very well.”

Ranboo nods, pulling out one of the gaudy print button ups. This one has sailboats on it.

“I guess it’s like, you know it when you feel it, and being around magic helps settle a lot of negative feelings? Like, you walk into a place and you feel like you’re immediately welcomed.”

He thinks on that, for a second. The feeling he got, those first steps into the new house. Yes, it made sense. It made sense-- magic, Ranboo supposes.

“I think I get it.”

“Okay, cool. And, well. Wilbur knows this trick to learn what type of magical gift you might have, do you want to try it later?”

“Um, sure?” Not like he had anything left to lose-- not to mention, the thought of it made Ranboo feel... a little giddy.

He’s all but squashed the little voice in the back of his head saying that all this magic was demonic and evil. Ranboo thinks he’s a good judge of character-- maybe he’s a poor judge of character, and it truly is demonic and even and Satanic-- and he’s read the bible back-to-front and front-to-back and even upside down, and it says to love your neighbors. *Love your neighbors*, love everyone as you would *yourself*, and that includes magical neighbors, right?

He thinks so. A lot of scripture is based on how one interprets it on their own, really. But it seems like Sister Agnes’ motivations of burning his--

Burning his--

No, don’t wanna think about that--

It seems like Sister Agnes’ motivations were more led by the dreamon than anything else. And Techno killed that dreamon. The dreamons were the real demons, and if God created those, too, purposely or a human created them inadvertently, he would hope that people would be given gifts to protect themselves from those creatures as well, right?

Rationalization. Maybe a bit of cognitive dissonance. Ranboo doesn’t know, but it doesn’t feel like he’s doing anything wrong at all. So unless he’s so incredibly deep in *sin and evil and death* that he can’t tell what he’s doing, Ranboo thinks magic is okay.

And maybe it’ll explain things. His poor memory. His face blindness. His sleepwalking.

“What do you mean, what ‘type’?” The phrasing sticks out to Ranboo the most. He grabs another awful-looking button up. This one has pineapples on it. He wants it.

“There’s a bit of diversity to magic, you see.” Phil explains, as he’s handed the two awful-looking button ups by Ranboo. He winces at the patterns, but doesn’t seem to judge too much further than that. Maybe in his own head. “Everyone has a gift, whether it’s more magical or mundane, and there’s also magical techniques and tricks that you can learn. Not like phony magicians, but learned magic exists as well.”

Huh, cool.

“The gifts tend to come in a few different... kinds, I guess. There’s more elemental-gifts, like fire, water, earth, air, light, darkness-- and not evil darkness, just the opposite of light, like your shadow...” He points down at the small shadow behind Ranboo as a result of the lighting in the store. “...Or mind or matter, which are different mental and physical gifts.”

“Ah. That’s a lot. I’m probably going to forget most of that.”

“Don’t worry, if you forget, I’ll be happy to remind you.” Phil gives him a smile. “Anyway. You don’t have to, but it’ll also figure out if you have a magical gift or not, so it’s worth a

shot.”

“Yeah... Sure. I’ll do it.”

“Cool, I’ll let Wil know.”

They get a few more pairs of pants and a few more shirts-- including a good few gaudy button ups that Phil looks a little disappointed in Ranboo for picking out, but he can’t just *not* get those now that he has the ability to-- before they move onto another store.

This time it’s furniture.

Ranboo doesn’t think he needs much else, though Phil seems determined to get him at least a desk and a bookshelf for the room, and anything else that Ranboo can use to decorate the already plain room.

The furniture store is huge, taking up a good bit of the mall in total and stretching out into a larger second-floor.

He does find a desk, one that Phil says will look good with his dresser, and a simple desk chair that spins. Ranboo spins in it at the store for probably a little too long, but it’s fun, and it’s definitely something he can see himself doing more in the future. The desk has a little shelf on it for books to go on, too, but Phil also finds a small shelf thing that barely goes up to Ranboo’s knee, with space to put books and other future belongings. It’s small enough that it could be put on top of his dresser, if they moved the painting over it.

Nothing else comes out of the trip to that store.

After that, they stop at the food court for lunch, but elect to eat outside.

“So, um.” Ranboo clears his throat. “How many... how many people have magic? In this town?”

He’s heard the word *community* thrown around a lot. He can’t help but be a little curious.

“Eh, a good amount.” Phil shrugs. “I don’t know the numbers, exactly. But we all know each other, because magic is one of the things that unites us easily.”

Ah. He looks down at his sandwich. He wonders how many people he’s encountered, in their small town, who have had magic and he didn’t know.

He wonders.

“Alright, well, it looks like that’s the last of the list,” Phil comments, as they toss their lunches away outside. They’ve got a decent amount of bags, but they made a trip back to the car to not have to worry about carrying it all through the mall before they got lunch. “Hey, you said you like to read, right, Ranboo?”

“Um, yeah?”

“Okay, make that one more stop.” Phil grins.

“What?”

“You’ll like this.”

And Ranboo does.

It’s a bookstore.

He’s been only in the library before, peeking through pages of books he isn’t supposed to touch, with a watchful eye out for his caregivers, constantly flickering up to check. Little rebellions, small enough to hardly be counted, but important nonetheless.

But here? He feels free. He feels free to pick up whatever book he wants, and Phil hangs out in the cafe, ordering a coffee, while he wanders through the shelves.

And, well. If Ranboo ends up leaving the bookstore an hour later with a membership card and ten books, that’s no one’s business but his own.

Ranboo blinks at Wilbur, sitting across from him.

They’re in Phil’s office. It’s not the sort of office that he could ever imagine one of his old caregivers in-- he should stop thinking about them so much, a part of him says, even though they were raising him for most of his life, even if he can’t remember it that well-- just like any other part of the house. It’s a mixture of antique and modern, with books that look like they should be in museums and a rather strange romance novel placed cover-out with a man on the cover that has striking similarities to Phil.

But it’s open. The door is usually left open, unlike Sister Agnes’ office, and it feels welcoming. It feels like Ranboo can just walk in and not get in trouble. The comfortable chair in the corner looks much more plush than the one he barely remembers in Sister Agnes’ office.

They’re sitting on the carpet in Phil’s office with the door shut. Doing magic.

The thought, the idea-- it makes a bit of Ranboo’s skin crawl. He has to remind himself that he’s not going to get in trouble, nothing is going to get burned (hopefully), he has to remind himself that he’s okay.

Wilbur glances up, shuffling the deck of cards. It isn’t a tarot deck-- not that Ranboo really knows what that is to begin with, but it’s a deck of only eight cards, each with their own symbol drawn out in a beautifully illustrative design that Ranboo could stare at forever if he wanted to.

“Ayup.” Wilbur says, clearing his throat. The eight cards are shuffled. “Dunno how much Phil told you, but this is basically how we figure out what kind of magic someone has.”

He holds up one card. There's a fish-person-- a mermaid?-- floating in water with a harp. The word water is beautifully inscribed on the top of the card.

"Eight cards. Eight types of magic you can have." He puts the card back into the pile, shuffles again. It's hardly a shuffle with the little amount of cards, but it's the only way to describe the action that Wilbur is doing.

Ranboo nods. Eight types of magic, he repeats, in his head, to hopefully not forget.

(He'll have to write it down after this, of course, so he doesn't forget.)

"It doesn't tell you specifically what type of magic you'll have." Wilbur adds. He straightens the deck, before stretching out the cards in his hands to look like a fan. The back of the cards are facing up so Ranboo can't see any of the beautiful illustrations, but that's the point.

Wilbur reaches into the cup that he had brought, pulling out the salt and sprinkling it out on the cards. There's a flash of light akin to a firecracker, and all the cards begin to glow a soft, pale blue color.

"Pretty cool, huh?" Wilbur's eyes are glowing-- no, not glowing. They're sparkling, with the same magical pale blue color as the cards. "A friend taught me this ol' technique." He smirks.

Ranboo nods-- he's starstruck by the magic in front of him. Just seeing Tommy and Tubbo use their magic, and now this-- it's pretty, pretty damn neat.

There's a part of him that hopes he has magic, too. It's a long shot, but everyone seems to think that Ranboo has something magical inside of him. With everything that has happened-- being more at ease around magic, being able to feel it more than a normal person should-- it makes sense why they would assume Ranboo had some sort of magic, even if it was only a little bit, even if it was only a sensitivity to magic.

To have a magical gift? That would be very neat to Ranboo. He can't think of any other interesting words, he's too transfixed by it all happening to think so.

"Now, the way this works..." Wilbur flaps the cards in his hands. The blue energy glows along with it. "You'll pick a card. The card will say what magic you have. If the card is completely blank, you don't have magic. All you gotta do is pick a card and see."

"Any card?"

"You're supposed to go with what your heart says, according to Niki, but." Wilbur shrugs. "Just pick a card, don't think about it too much."

Ranboo nods. He looks at the cards. Do any of them stick out to him too much?

Don't think about it, a small voice in the back of his head says. Right, right. Don't think about it. He looks at the cards and the one at the very left seems to be sticking out a little bit more, so he grabs that one. In the process, he accidentally pulls two cards out.

"Oh, sorry." Ranboo says, the card falling on the floor.

"You're good, man." Wilbur gives him a warm grin. He doesn't go to pick up the card. "Flip over your card."

Ranboo nods.

His heart feels like it's about to beat out of his chest. There is so much happening-- and he can only imagine the way that Tommy and Tubbo are scrunched up against the closed office door, leaning their ears on the wood, trying to hear what is going on in the process.

His family will love him no matter what, he knows. He hasn't used the word family much to refer to this group of people who have adopted him, except in hypotheticals. His new family. His new home. Nothing has settled in yet. Maybe it never will.

Either way, whether or not Ranboo has a gift, it doesn't matter, because they will love him all the same.

(Maybe Ranboo will be upset, and a little jealous, that he wasn't born with a gift, but he's been reassured that he can learn magic, too, apparently.)

He flips over the card.

It's not black. Instead, it's got an illustration of a man with three eyes. MIND is written in calligraphy at the top of the card.

Mind. Ranboo stares at the card, transfixed by the man with three eyes, when a small gasp of air from Wilbur catches his attention. He glances up.

"What?"

Wilbur points at the card that Ranboo accidentally knocked out of his hand. It's glowing, too, just like the Mind card is in Ranboo's hand. The other cards in Wilbur's hands have gone dark.

"All the cards are supposed to go dark once you pick the card, unless..." He picks the fallen card up slowly. It's blank, but it's still glowing.

The colors have shifted. Where the mind card had begun to glow a soft lime color, the mystery card's glow was shifting iridescently.

"Hold it." Wilbur pushes it into Ranboo's other hand, he doesn't really have a choice in the matter. The card's shifting glow settled into a warm red, and the blank card melted into a design.

Matter. It's a strongman, like one would see in a circus, but more of a vintage circus. Not one of the modern ones that Ranboo has heard stories of.

"...What?"

"I mean, it's happened before." Wilbur says, looking at the two cards with Ranboo. "More often than you think, really."

“What has? What’s... what does this mean?”

“Well, you’ve got two cards. Two different types of magic.” Wilbur holds up two fingers. He sets them down on the two cards, and the glowing stops. The images remain. “You’ve got two gifts, Ranboo.”

Two? He had been hoping-- no, Ranboo had been praying for one. One minuscule gift, something that he could have, because it would be really cool to have. Everyone has wished for a magical gift or superpower before, and with this world Ranboo is in, of course he would pray for something, anything, but not big, or spectacular. Yet, here he was, with two cards in front of him.

“It could just be, like. A small gift. Maybe you’re a little bit faster than other people, or you can do math better.” The man across from him adds as he picks up the two cards. “We thought for a while that Tommy had two gifts because he moves so quickly, but he doesn’t sit down for long enough to do this card shit, so we’ve practically given up.” Wilbur pulls himself off the ground, grabbing the small cup of salt. He sets it on Phil’s desk, and puts the card stack next to it.

“Oh. Okay.”

Wilbur stretches out an arm-- and Ranboo takes it. It’s almost too easy for him to pull Ranboo up, but Ranboo is pretty lanky and light for his height, so not unexpected. He glances down at his hands.

Two gifts? What-- what could that even mean?

“The only way to find out is to wait n’ see.” Wilbur replies, as if he read Ranboo’s thoughts. No, wait, Ranboo said them all aloud again, didn’t he? He probably did. “But hey, you can brag to everyone you’ve got two gifts, Tommy will be so upset it’s gonna be fucking hilarious.”

He didn’t like the idea of bragging about it, especially because-- well, they didn’t know much else, except for the sorts of magical gifts Ranboo has. They only knew the type of gift, now. Mind and matter. And they could be-- they could be anything, from running a little faster, maybe having better stamina, or being good at math, like Wilbur said. It could be anything.

“Alright, they’ve been waiting at the door too long.” Wilbur sighs. “You can open the door now, Toms.”

There’s a beat of silence. Then the doorknob turns, and the old oak door creaks open.

Tommy and Tubbo were standing at the door, probably listening in the whole time.

“Alright, big man, we’ve got some bets to win.” Tommy says loudly, grabbing Ranboo by the wrist and dragging him out of the office and into the hallway. Tubbo has a similar devilish look to his face.

“You-- you bet on me?”

"In all fairness, other than the occasional dreamon attack, there isn't anything new usually happening in the community." Tubbo deadpans. He blinks.

Well, okay. Ranboo supposes that's okay.

"Now, let me guess.... Fire." Tommy says.

"Um, no? I can just--"

"No, no, I got this..." Tommy rubs his temples, his eyes digging into Ranboo's soul. He doesn't have any mental powers. Nothing is going to work, but he has a one-in-seven chance to guess it right, now. "L..Light."

"It feels like you're trying to guess his Pokemon type." Tubbo adds, crossing his arms.

"No, it's--"

"Water! Like Wilbur!" Tubbo interjects, forgetting his previous statement and joining in on the fun.

"No. And wait, what?" He glances back to Wilbur, who smirks before disappearing away from them down the hall. He still doesn't have a concrete explanation of everyone's magic--and that is something he would expect to remember at least a little bit.

"Hm." Tubbo scratches his chin. "Wait. If you were more elemental, we would've seen more signs by now, so you're probably a mind or a matter!"

Ah, well. He was, technically, right.

"Actually... Yeah."

Tubbo grinned, punching his hand into the air. "Sweet! Big T, you owe me twenty bucks now!"

"You didn't guess which one, though!"

"No, Tubbo was right." Ranboo raises his voice to cut in before either of his friends could get into more of a debate over his magical gifts. "Apparently, I've got... two. Both mind and matter."

"Whoa, that's so cool!" Tubbo says.

"That isn't fuckin' fair!" Tommy screams.

This is exactly what Ranboo expected.

This chapter is 5,600 words and there was going to be more but I cut it off because this chapter is 5.6k WORDS--

Well, my research says that the best thing to do with a sleepwalker is to either lock the door or guide them back into bed. Wilbur clearly didn't take Ranboo back to his bedroom, but it was also two in the morning, the couch was closer, what can I say? Also I love the morning interaction with Techno so much. Imagine enjoying a bowl of cereal and your adopted older brother (?) walks into the kitchen looking like he just got off the set of *The Shining*'s elevator scene. That's wack.

Anyway, let's talk about development and exposition! I don't want to be too world-dumpy in these chapters because, well that isn't always fun to read and I know that. And I don't want Ranboo to be particularly sitting down at a table or something for some Magic Lessons with Mr. Philza Minecraft, so I figured, "why not just have them talk about it on their mall trip?" and thus that middle scene was born. It's a bit longer and doesn't have as many breaks in it, but I think it flows better without them. If I don't end up liking it without breaks I will go back and add that in, so if you're reading this note and see a lot of little breaks in the story, YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED.

Why is Ranboo me whenever I go to Barnes & Noble? Don't ask. If you're curious, he's got a good selection of books. I know *American Gods* by Neil Gaiman is on there, and so is *The Hunger Games*. Other books he's picked up, I'll leave to your imagination *even though I totally don't have a list of books he probably got, what, I don't know what you mean.....*

Also, yup, more MAGIC LORE!! I've been waiting to drop this on y'all for weeks! I've had this figured out since the BEGINNING. Cause, like, yeah, we know all the elements, but what about light and shadow, too? And then I thought, well, what about abilities like Tubbo's, that's not an element. So that's where Mind and Matter come in-- they're broader categories, mind is all the abilities that are more mental, like empathy or dreamwalking, while matter is more physical abilities, like Tubbo's, being super strong and durable. If that makes sense. But these are just for gifts-- there's learned magic, too, which isn't that strong, either, but it's funky little tricks like with the cards, or maybe other things too you might've seen somewhere or not who knows ;)

Wow, Ranboo, GOD lets you have TWO MAGIC GIFTS? Okay, yeah I'll see myself out hahaha--

Anyway. Hope you guys enjoyed THIS LONG CHAPTER. There's more fun stuff to come. Not all fluffy stuff, unfortunately, but the show must go on, unfortunately :)

Almost Normal But Unfortunately Not Quite Yet

Chapter Notes

[FANART?!!!!!! AMAZING EPIC BEAUTIFUL FANART??????!!!! YESSSS!!!!!!](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Training.

It was, well--

Ranboo didn't *expect* it.

He supposes that, well, *training* does make sense. He's never been involved in any sports (for obvious reasons), they have a lot of training involved, and even though *magic* is not a *sport*, there's some sort of work out there. Some sort of muscle that needs to be honed. Energy that needs to be controlled.

And he'd seen Tommy and Tubbo using their powers, in a controlled manner, in the field and orchard behind the house a few times over the summer, after the secret was revealed. Those were probably training days, now that Ranboo has the hindsight to think on it, even if he doesn't recall them that well.

Maybe he was a bit oblivious, to not connect the dots, but he wasn't expecting his first Saturday at his new home being thrown into *training*.

"It's mostly for self-defense." Tommy explains, though he pouts as he does. Tubbo has yet to arrive, it's almost eight in the morning, Ranboo knows he's awake because of his old schedule still, but being able to witness Tommy awake at such an early morning feels a bit like a miracle. "Phil says we're not *old enough* yet to hunt dreamons."

Ah, well. Ranboo would much rather *stay away* from those things. Seeing how he'd lived under one for about a month, he knew what they could throw. And it probably wasn't even the worst. He'd seen Techno come back covered in dreamon blood twice in one week, the next as gory and gross as the first. At least he hadn't been trying to eat breakfast the second time, but it was still unnerving.

He doesn't remember a lot about what he was told about dreamons. All that information was thrown into a fire. But there's a new journal in his possession, and he hardly leaves his room without it, in case *something* happens when he isn't expecting it.

"Um... We're still kids, so that makes sense." Ranboo says, responding to Tommy probably a few minutes too late.

"Yeah, but no dreamon could ever take *me* down!" The blond stands up tall, pushing his chest out. There's a gust of wind that goes by, stronger than it should be, with a hum of magic.

It's... something he's started to pick up a little more. The longer Ranboo is around magic, it seems, the more noticeable it becomes. Just a small hum in the air when the wind whistles around Tommy.

"It's a simple fact that I'm too fuckin' strong."

Ranboo nods, but he does let out a light chuckle at Tommy's sense of grandiose.

"What are you laughing at?"

"Nothing, nothing--" The astounded face that Ranboo receives in response is also something that he has to laugh at, but he tries his best-- by God, he *tries his best* -- to hold back on it. Plus, out of the corner of his eye, he notices Tubbo walking through the yard, to the orchard in the back.

Phil is in the back, too, as is Techno. Wilbur is still asleep at this time of day, Ranboo assumes that he sleeps on a completely different schedule as everyone else. It's a Saturday morning, he would imagine it would take a miracle for Tommy and Tubbo to be up at such a time, but they both seem pretty energetic as Tubbo waves to Ranboo before he and Tommy join Phil closer to the trees.

Then, what am I--

A large *thunk* pulls Ranboo from his thoughts. Techno is in front of him, dressed in a simple tunic (because, in all honesty, what he wears can hardly be called *normal clothes*), holding a wooden sword. The thunk in front of Ranboo is a similarly sized wooden sword.

Techno glances down at the sword, then meets Ranboo in the eyes again.

"Oh, um. Sorry."

"Don't apologize." Techno says, clearing his throat. Ranboo leans down to pick up the sword.

Why? Why is he holding a sword? He's apparently very easy to read, as Techno speaks again.

"We don't know *what* your gifts are." He swings the sword around with ease, professional ease. It looks like it weighs nothing in Techno's hands, but it's a considerable weight in Ranboo's. "Don't know if they're more magical in nature, or just enhanced physical and mental abilities, so Phil wants me to train you how to use some weapons."

"Oh." Makes sense. It was all for self-defense-- even though Ranboo had only encountered two dreamons so far, if he were to be living with this new family, it would be best for him to know how to protect himself from the nightmare creatures, wouldn't it? Even if it was incredibly uncommon, according to Tommy, for them to come across any.

But he'd dealt with two in the past few months alone. Two-- well, technically it was the same *one*, but it was two incidents with a dreamon-- attacks, where Ranboo could do nothing.

He holds up the sword. He looks at it. Can he-- can he really learn how to swing something like this around, like the heroes of old? *Why don't they just use guns?*

"You're holding it wrong." Techno says, interrupting his thoughts.

"Oh." He shifts his hands in holding it.

"No, not like that." Techno shows him how he holds it, with both hands, even though he was swinging it around with ease a few moments ago with one hand. Before Ranboo can get a chance to shift his hands the way Techno does, the man swipes with the sword and knocks it out of his hands. "That's why you don't hold it like that."

"Oh. Okay." He leans down to pick the sword back up. It feels weird in his hands. His hands are also a little sweaty-- nerves, anxiety, call it what you will-- and the wooden sword feels like it needs a good sanding soon, or he'll come out of future training with splinters. "Like this?"

Techno nods. There's a small, faint smile on his face. A great start.

"I'll probably just teach you how to block today." The man explains, taking a few paces away from Ranboo. He holds his sword with one hand, with ease, a coolness that Ranboo can only hope to imitate in the future. "Ready?"

"Wait, aren't you--"

Before Ranboo has a chance to finish, Techno charges. The man has speed and strength over Ranboo, and he doesn't know what to do, but he holds his sword up in defense. *Like this?*

It doesn't work, it's swiped out of his hands and tossed to the floor in seconds.

"You didn't even tell me how I was supposed to hold it." Ranboo says, exasperated.

Techno smirks. Not a faint smile, but something a little more mischievous. "I believe in learning on the job."

Oh, great.

It isn't long before Ranboo has to take a break. He doesn't have the strength, or speed, or stamina, or *anything* to keep up with Techno. He can already tell his muscles are going to be screaming at him tomorrow. They're screaming at him now.

The small bench by the back porch has a small cooler stashed by it, and Ranboo takes a bottle of water out, sipping it slowly, to not make himself sick. Techno leans against the porch. He hasn't broken out a single sweat yet. He doesn't look like anything has happened yet, except the braid in his hair is a little looser from moving around so much.

How? Is it his gift? Is it just Techno being Techno? Ranboo can't help but wonder. He turns his gaze out to the orchard, where Tommy and Tubbo were training. Sparring. There's a small echo of playful banter, but not anything Ranboo could understand from far away.

Still, they were still going. It's only been an hour, and Ranboo already has to take a break. Amongst other, smaller, time-outs he had to ask for after being charged by Techno so many times. The man resembled a wild boar when he did that, eyes sparkling, something... Something *terrifying* about it.

It makes sense that he deals with dreamons so much, if that was him at his weakest, trying to train someone else.

"You're doing... good." It looks like it pained Techo a bit to say that.

"Huh?"

"You're doing good," Techno repeats, untangling his hair and running his hand through it.
"Better than Tommy or Wilbur ever have with a sword, at least."

"Really?"

"Tommy's too irrational and impatient to learn the basics." Techno explains, as he sections off his hair to fix it back into its braid. Three sections of bright pink hair, and he begins to cross them to make the braid. Ranboo can't help but watch. He's seen the younger girls at the orphanage braid hair before, and it always seemed so complicated to do. "Wilbur doesn't like fighting, if he does, he relies too much on his gift. And Tubbo..."

They glance out to the sparring again. Tubbo charges directly at Tommy and knocks them both to the ground.

"...Super durable, but prefers to use his body as a weapon." Techno rolls his eyes. "At least he's a little more patient than Tommy, and knows some basics."

Ranboo nods. It all sounds *like* them. He's only been living with this new family for a few days, and, well, it's what he would have expected it to be. Chaotic. Messy. But it's the first time he's ever felt truly at ease, truly at *home*, with people. So he'll take the chaos and the mess because it's going to be just as much a part of him as it is for his family.

"What about you?"

"Heh?"

"I mean-- why do you know how to fight with weapons, and stuff? Is it, uh, your gift?"

"No."

"Oh, then what is--"

Techno doesn't answer, only picks up his training sword again and takes a few more paces back. He gives Ranboo the same smirk again.

Ugh.

“If you can ever knock the sword out of my hand, maybe I’ll tell you.” Techno taunts. It’s tempting for Ranboo to get up, to try, to grab the wooden sword by his feet and charge at him. To try and knock the sword out of the other man’s hands.

But he probably would never be able to. Ranboo knows his limits. He knows his skills. He can hardly block an attack as it is, and now he’s being challenged to charge and attack.

“I think-- I’ll pass.” *For now*, he supposes. Maybe there would be another way to get that information out of the pink-haired man, but at the current moment, Ranboo has more to learn.

Lunch is pizza, a large frozen pizza that Phil bought the last time he went to the grocery store and threw in the oven. It was just cheese and pepperoni, and Ranboo never expected something *frozen* to taste and smell as good as it does.

Tubbo has five slices of it stacked onto his plate. It’s odd, but everything in this house is *so odd* that Ranboo doesn’t even question it anymore.

“I still can’t believe you charged at me like that, man!” Tommy was nursing a bruise on his left side. Ranboo had only barely seen it out of the corner of his eye-- Tommy had used his wind abilities to toss Tubbo up into the air and out of reach, but Tubbo curled in on himself and used himself as an odd sort of cannon ball to retaliate. That’s when they had to end the spar.

“Oh, hush, you’ll be fine by next week,” Tubbo replies, his mouth full of pizza.

Don’t talk with food in your mouth, a voice in Ranboo’s head, that sounds similar to Sister Anne, scolds. He keeps quiet and bites into his own slice of pizza.

They weren’t at the table-- it was a nice day, and still warm out for October, so the three of them were sitting on the back porch. Not at a table or anything, just directly on the porch.

“How’d *your* training go, Ranboo?” Tubbo asks, after swallowing his mouth full.

“Um. Okay, I guess?” He looks down at his hands, which will definitely be calloused tomorrow. “Techno was just teaching me how to block, I don’t think I’m very good at it.”

“I’m sure you’re doing great!” Tubbo says. “Techno, he’s, uh--”

“-- A bitch!” Tommy interjects.

“Well, sometimes.” The brunet rolls his eyes, not even looking at his friend. “Techno’s real strong, and that’s not even his gift!”

Wait.

“It... isn’t?”

Tommy shakes his head, opens his mouth, but stops, mid-thought. “I bet you’ll never fuckin’ guess what it is.”

“Oh, come on, that isn’t fair--”

“I bet twenty bucks Ranboo *can* guess it.” Tubbo retorts.

“Forty bucks he won’t get it in the next two weeks.”

“Deal.”

“Are you two seriously betting on this right now?”

“Eh, it’s not like it’s anything new.” Tubbo shrugs, taking another bite of his pizza. It’s his fourth slice.

Oh, no. Ranboo sighs. “Are there *more* bets I should know about?” There was already the one about his own abilities, and now there’s this *new one*, and what else could there possibly be?

“Well.” Tommy chews through his bite of pizza, swallowing hard. “It ain’t a bet, but it’s kinda a challenge.”

“Do I even *want* to know?”

“It’s not about you, this time!” Tubbo interjects quickly. He grabs his paper towel and wipes off his hands of grease. “It’s kinda... A whole community thing?”

“Hard to explain, but basically, no one knows how old Techno is.” Tommy says, shaking the second slice of pizza in his hand, as if he was entertained by the way it swung. “You gotta guess it. Once you do, it’s like-- a secret club. You can’t tell anyone how old he is, and you get to laugh at everyone who guesses.”

“Oh.” Ranboo glances through the back door. Wilbur had woken up with the smell of pizza, and he, Phil, and Techno were all sitting at the table. Ranboo looks at Techno. He doesn’t look that old. “How many people are in it?”

“Just Phil and Wilbur, at the minute. But you bet your ass I’ll be in it, next!” Tommy grins.

“Wait, you don’t know how old he is? I thought-- I thought he was our brother...?”

“He’s not *officially* our brother. He’s, like, Phil’s best friend or something, when Wil was younger he thought that Techno was our older brother and it kinda got stuck as an inside joke.”

Oh. It seems like Ranboo is learning *a lot* of things today.

Tubbo breaks out into giggles, and Tommy laughs, too.

“Wh--what?”

"Your face! It's hilarious, Ranboo-- you look like you just learned something horrifying, oh my god."

Well. What a *day*.

Ranboo's up late.

Not for any particular reason, except, well, maybe he got a little too engrossed in the copy of The Odyssey that Techno had given him after dinner, maybe the story was a little too investing to not keep reading. But the story was too good to not put down, even if it was written a little weirdly in the old epic poem way of writing.

There's a sliver of moon in the sky, and even though he has the lamp by his bed lit, cool moonlight still drifts into his bedroom. He turns the page.

So, you ask me the name I'm known by, Cyclops?

I will tell you. But you must give me a guest-gift

as you've promised. Nobody—that's my name. Nobody—

so my mother and father call me, all my friends....

The whole house is somewhat awake still, Ranboo isn't the only one up late. Leaning against his bed frame, Ranboo can hear the sounds of Tommy playing some video game with his school friends next door. Minecraft, if he remembers correctly.

Tommy is helping Ranboo set up a PC tomorrow, probably the biggest thing of technology Ranboo has ever owned, because if he's going to be taking online classes, it would be good to have.

Tommy had also worn Phil down into getting Ranboo one so Tommy could introduce Ranboo to the wonderful world of PC gaming. They had a Nintendo Switch in the living room and plenty of controllers to play with, and apparently Ranboo was really good at Mario Kart, but he doesn't think that it's one of his two magical gifts he apparently has.

There's a faint sound of strumming, too, somewhere in the house. Wilbur said he was in the process of writing a new song, and apparently, he will play into the later hours of the night.

Well, it wasn't even midnight yet, by the glance of the clock on Ranboo's wall.

Ranboo lets the book lay comfortably in his lap as his thoughts begin to pull him out of it. It was Saturday night-- tomorrow would be a Sunday. His first Sunday, away from the orphanage.

He should go to mass. He hadn't mentioned it to Phil, or Techno, or Tommy, or Wilbur, but-- but he should go. He had to go to mass. The church was a decent drive away, still, so he would need a ride, but... They wouldn't mind, would they?

This new family of his... cares. Cares about him. Right?

They care. They won't mind. No one ever talked about religion, and it was weird. There was no prayer before meals, Ranboo would always take a second to send up a quick *Thank you Lord, for this meal*, before he would eat. Not having a structured dinner, either, was weird enough, but meals they would have together, like the lunch after training and dinners occasionally, no prayer.

He was sure he had the only bible in the house, too. They weren't that religious of folk, it seemed, which. Ranboo doesn't mind. It's weird, going from so *much* to nothing, a little jarring, if anything, but he'll adapt.

They won't mind, Phil said to him that he's part of the family. They-- they'll probably drive him over in the morning. Probably. They wouldn't mind.

A sound echoes downstairs. It sounds like knocking, but not on his door. More... on the front door.

What? Ranboo wonders, tossing his phone into the book to act as a bookmark so he could stand up and glance out his door. *His door, so weird to think about--*

It seems that he's the only one who had the idea. Tommy probably had his thick headphones on and couldn't hear, and Wilbur was a little further down the hall and too engrossed in his music, so it was probably nothing. Maybe a prank.

The knocking at the door came back. More frantic.

"I'm coming!" He heard Phil downstairs yell, and the curiosity got the better of Ranboo, and he quietly walked to the top of the stairs so he could glance down and get a look at the front door. He watches Phil shrug on a thicker coat, before opening the door. "Jesus Christ, what the hell--"

He sees two other men enter. They look to be around Wilbur's age, or maybe Techno's age (whatever that is). One of them is holding the other one partially over his shoulder. There's blood.

A lot of blood.

And it's red.

Ranboo bites his lip at the sudden sight, but he doesn't move. He feels a shadow at his back-- he turns, and sees Tommy peering over his shoulder. It was weird to have a few inches of height over the blond.

Tommy pales at the sight, and bites his lip. The braces on his teeth reflect the soft glow of the light coming from downstairs, something not usually that noticeable.

"Fuckin' finally, I was knocking for a good five minutes or so!" One of the men said. The other one didn't look that conscious, and let out a small groan. "Techno is here, right?"

Phil nods. "Techno, I hope you're not doing anything important right now!" He yells, turning his head back. He notices Ranboo and Tommy at the top of the stairs, and gives them a concerned, fatherly look. "Go get Wilbur." He says, mostly directed at Tommy, who nods, and disappears just as quickly as he appeared.

Techno wanders out of the living room at the sound of his name. "What is it, Phil-- *oh.*"

"Yeah," The conscious man says, and Phil wraps the other man's arm around his shoulder, pulling him up. Ranboo hears footsteps, and Wilbur, who looks more awake than he usually does, and Tommy, run by him and jump down the stairs, two-by-two.

Ranboo doesn't know what to do. There are two strange men in the house (that he lives in, now, he reminds himself), that he doesn't know, and there's a lot of blood.

And there's an unsettling black color to the one man's white sweatshirt.

He watches as they shuffle quickly down the hall, towards the living room, Ranboo thinks, and he stays still at the top of the stairs.

What should... What should he do? *Two strangers he doesn't know, a lot of blood, it was so red-- but it was black, too. Do they need my help?*

What can I do?

There isn't much Ranboo can do. If his gut is right-- and in cases like this, he finds, it unfortunately will always be-- then he doesn't know how to deal with dreamons. He could barely hold a sword in his own hands that morning, and his hands are rough and already callusing from that morning.

He takes a hesitant step downstairs.

Chapter End Notes

Alright, readers. Take a guess and what I've been doing for the past ten or so days.

- Stardew Valley
- Procrastinating on the midterm essay I have due on the 26th
- Sleeping
- Not writing

If you chose all of the above, you're right!! :')

Midterms really do suck, though. I also already have work for finals coming up (a big final project, lemme tell ya), and I got an internship so my free time for writing is greatly reduced, but I haven't lost the muse for this story just yet! It comes when I least expect it, breaking down my dorm room door and sitting me at my computer to write.

I'm sorry if this chapter feels a little rushed. I want to get to the stuff that's making me more excited to write, but I can't just jump to it right away. I need to write some build-up, and the build-up wasn't coming out as fast as I had wanted... I hope this suffices. I'll definitely make edits and change it a bit later when the story is finished, probably, but hey I'm literally publishing as I am writing so everyone gets to see my process of being an absolute pants-er.

Story-wise, let's begin Ranboo's Epic Main Character Training Arc! I feel like this chapter was a little more dialogue-heavy than it usually is, but I had fun writing the interactions with the characters. He's starting to settle in, at least. Maybe except for that last bit at the end, but I'm sure everything's fine...

:)

See you next chapter!

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Didn't Expect That To Come Out Of Tonight, But Okay

Chapter Notes

CW:

- mentions of blood, injury, treatment
- probably ooc characters but they're all literally based on characters twitch streamers play in minecraft and one of them isn't deeply invested in lore so does it matter?

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Something digs at Ranboo's insides as he peers into the living room. He feels like he's too tall, too noticeable, and he tries to shrink in on himself like he always does, but no one turns their eyes to him as he just.

Stands there.

Phil's got his back turned to him. The passed-out stranger is laid across the couch, and Techno is standing over him with a roll of bandages, wrapping some wound up. The other stranger is reclined at the foot of the couch, not as injured as the first, but he doesn't look particularly ecstatic to be there.

"-- Wilbur, you and Tommy need to go check the protection wards." Phil is saying. Ranboo doesn't understand most of it, since it's magic-talk that he hasn't learned yet. He's holding a sword, one made of some sort of black material that reflects iridescent colors in the light of the lamp by the couch. It's a sword that he hasn't seen before. "Techno's gonna stay here to help George and Sapnap, and--"

That's when Phil notices Ranboo, from the corner of his eye. Ranboo feels himself shrink down a little more. He wishes he could disappear.

But he doesn't.

Phil locks Ranboo in the eyes, before looking elsewhere. Still towards Ranboo, but not the eye contact anymore, thank goodness. "-- and Ranboo, stay here."

Stay here, it's relieving to hear that he's ordered to *stay* and not do anything else. To not have to get involved-- he's only had one lesson with the swords, he's in no way capable of handling anything on his own, and what-- what was it that Phil just said to Wilbur and Tommy? It was such an off-hand comment, and Ranboo forgot all about it completely.

He nods in response stiffly, to show that he heard Phil. The older man gave him a faint smile, walking a little closer to him.

"This isn't our first rodeo dealing with something like this. Stay in the house, and you'll be fine, alright?"

Ranboo nods. His mouth feels incredibly dry.

"Alright, let's go kick some dreamon *ass*!" Tommy breaks the mood, as he usually does.

"We're not fighting anything, *child*." Wilbur hits him upside the head, but they both leave out the door by the front porch.

Phil watches them leave, still standing next to Ranboo, before giving another reassuring smile to Ranboo before ducking out, as well.

He still isn't entirely sure what is happening, but they leave as quickly as they can, to-- do what they need to do. Can Phil really take on a dreamon all on his own, like Techno can? *What is his magic, anyway--?*

He glances back at the strangers. The awake one is staring at him, a mix of morbid curiosity and... some sort of fear, maybe? Ranboo fights the fear to go run back to his room, hide under his covers, and pretend that everything is a bad dream. He does wrap his fingers around the cross around his neck and bite his lip, and walks a little closer to see what Techno was doing.

The man had shoved all his pink hair into a high ponytail, out of his face, and he was finishing wrapping up a loose bandage around the not-awake stranger's head. As soon as he finishes, Techno rubs his hands together, and they start to glow with a faint, white, light. No-- it's not white. It's slightly pink, but the color itself is so *pastel* and *light* that you can only see it if you squint. Techno sets his glowing palms on the not-awake stranger's chest, and the glow leaks out and spreads. A small glow covers the stranger's whole body, even when Techno moves his hands away, there's a pink shimmer to the other man's skin.

Almost like it was coated in a faint glitter.

Techno glances up, noticing that Ranboo was watching. "Enjoying the show?"

"Um, I--" Ranboo feels his face flush *immediately*. Awake-stranger snickers.

"If you're going to stand here," Techno says, standing up and wiping his hands together, as if they were covered in dirt. Well, the not awake-man was covered in dirt and dreamon blood and actual *human* blood, so. Probably. "Can you go into the kitchen and get some ice? And maybe find an extra towel while you're at it." He glances down at his shirt. There's a wine-red colored stain on the white fabric. "Ugh, this is going to take forever to get out."

Ranboo nods, and immediately turns to leave the living room to get to the kitchen. He stops at the downstairs bathroom, too, and grabs one of the hand-towels that is hanging in there. It might be meant for more decoration, but he doesn't have the house memorized like he did the orphanage. He isn't sure what door is a room, a closet, or something else, and he doesn't want to go digging. There's a few ice packs in the freezer, some for food-specific uses, but he grabs one that looks more meant for first aid.

Hopefully this works.

Back in the living room, Techno is tending to the awake-man, too, but the awake-man doesn't seem to be enjoying it.

"I'm-- I'm *fine*, you should be helping George out, more!"

Techno rolls his eyes. His hands are glowing the same faint pink color as they were before. "You know how my magic works, Sapnap. It'll take longer because of his injuries, but he'll be fine. You, on the other hand, probably have at least *one* broken rib-- Oh, Ranboo, come over here. Give me the towel."

Ranboo nods, and does as he's told. He's helped the Sisters back at the orphanage deal with injuries before, and he's used the first aid kit a few times on the younger kids when no one was easily accessible, so, well. He knows *something*. Not how to deal with what looks like near-fatal wounds, but it's better than knowing nothing.

He hands Techno the ice pack and the towel, and the older man wraps the ice pack up before slamming it on the awake-man's head. *Sapnap? Is that what Techno called him?*

Slamming might be too strong of a verb to use, but it did at least look like that. Whether Techno had the strength behind that or not, was beside the point.

"Ah, Jesus, that's cold!"

"It's supposed to be." Techno says with a sigh. "I hope you know you're acting insufferable right now."

The man-- Sapnap, Ranboo hopes he's got the name right- gives Techno a cheeky grin. "Just as I'm supposed to--" He's immediately slapped with one of Techno's glowing hands. The magic leaves a glowing pink handprint on the man's cheek. "--Whoa that's so weird, that didn't hurt at all."

"It'd be against the point of the magic, wouldn't it?" Techno sighs. He stands up, and looks at Ranboo. "Stay here for a second. I know there's a bed mat around here somewhere, so we can set up a bed for him."

Ranboo nods. He doesn't feel like talking. It's an incredibly strange, bizarre, awkward situation that he isn't too big of a fan of, but he wants to help *somewhat*.

Techno gets to the hallway before Ranboo hears the older man yell, "Oh, by the way, he's gonna pass out any minute now."

"What--?!" Ranboo turns his head and he's barely able to catch the stranger's head before it hits the ground with a loud thud. He lowers it down slowly, and takes away the ice pack from his head. The same pink glimmer that was on the sleeping man's skin has now spread across-- well, now they were both sleeping. So the little nicknames he's trying to give them to tell the two men apart aren't gonna work.

Um.

It takes an extra few minutes to roll out the bed mat and then roll Sapnap (Ranboo prays to God he's got the name right) onto it, and Techno tosses a blanket over the sleeping man and calls it there.

Phil isn't back yet. Nor are Wilbur or Tommy. If there was-- if there was a dreamon hunting, were they attacked? Were they fighting? *Were they okay-- Lord, please, let my family come home safe--*

Huh. *Family*.

Techno ducks into the kitchen and turns on the stove, setting a tea kettle on top of a burner. Ranboo follows behind, not exactly sure of anything anymore.

"Do you want some?"

"What?"

"Tea." Techno says, opening a cupboard, and taking out a rather large clear tub. He could see hundreds of individually wrapped tea bags in them. Some of them were store-bought, while others looked like crushed herbs and more homemade. He didn't know they had all that tea, and when Techno sets it on the kitchen table, Ranboo cannot count how much *tea* there is. There's so much tea. "It helps to de-stress."

"S-Sure." He's had tea a few times before, taking a few from the Sisters when they offered, and it was nice. "Any recommendations?"

"Chamomile for sleep." Techno rattles off immediately. "I think there's still a few bags of mint tea left over from last time we harvested mint over the summer."

He's had mint tea before. Techno is generous enough to point it out, before grabbing two mugs, one designed like a cartoon character and the other an unusual, undecorated, plain mug-- and setting the two tea bags aside before pushing the tub to the other side of the table.

Techno groans, breaking the silence that formed between them as the tea kettle continues to heat up. "I'm not good at dealing with this stuff?"

"U-um. What stuff?"

Techno motions to Ranboo. "Nerves. Anxiety. *Emotions.*" The way the pink-haired man spits it out gets Ranboo to chuckle. He's never heard so much disgust thrown about for a single word. And it's a nice reprieve, too, because--

Ranboo isn't quite sure what just happened, but something did, and he wasn't going to be sleeping well that night at all.

"Look. It's not *uncommon*, but it does happen sometimes, that a dreamon gets too close to home, here." Techno explains, his arms crossed. "They're drawn to our magic, whether we like it or not. But Phil and I have put up protection wards through the yard, and the orchard-- if

something gets too close, you'll know. And Phil's fought a lot of dreamons, too, though he doesn't look like it. He can handle a rouge dreamon."

Can he? Ranboo thinks about the two in the living room-- if one could do that much damage, would Phil be able to hold it off?

"His magic is the antithesis to dreamons, in a way." Techno explains. The kettle whistles, letting them know the water is ready. Techno grabs the water and pours it into the mugs, handing Ranboo the cartoon character. Ranboo doesn't recognize the cartoon character, but the mug warms up his hands. "He's better at explaining it, though, if you ask."

Ranboo stares into the mug. The tea bag is changing the color of the water, it's a little transfixing to witness. "...What about you?"

"Heh?"

"Your-- your magic. It's healing?"

Techno takes a seat at the table, before taking a sip of the mug. The boiling hot water doesn't seem to bother him, but the surprise of it has worn off Ranboo. "Yep."

"That's, uh. Not what I expected."

Techno quirks an eyebrow over the mug as he takes another sip. His hair is falling out of the high-ponytail he pulled it up in, but he makes no move to fix it. "What did you expect?"

"I dunno, like. Some sort of strength, or something. Like Tubbo."

"Nope." Techno outstretches his hand, snapping his fingers. The same glow returns to just his one hand. The magic dances across his hand in a playful manner, and just a simple shake sends it away. "My magic also heals me. So you were smart to think that it was like Tubbo's."

He feels something swell up in his heart at the compliment, but Ranboo blows on his tea before taking a sip. It's hot, but it's good. The mint is strong, but it feels relaxing. Almost like magic. He doesn't think magic tea exists, but it feels like magic, and it's relaxing him, and that's what matters.

"Oh," he actually remembers something, for once. The bet that Tommy and Tubbo had made that day.

Techno glances up from his own tea. He's-- there's books scattered everywhere around the house, and he's grabbed the nearest one to him and is leafing through the pages. Ranboo can't read the language on the cover.

"Tommy and Tubbo made a bet on whether or not I'd guess your gift."

A beat of silence.

"What did Tubbo bet?"

"That-- that I'd guess it."

Another beat of silence.

"How much?"

"I don't remember."

Techno nods.

"You technically *did* guess it. I'll back you up on it. Anything to see Tommy lose money."

Ranboo sputters, but the mischievous grin on Techno's face betrays it all. He'd want to see his brother lose money, of course. Brothers were like that to each other sometimes. That's what books said, that's what stories from the Sisters told, and, well, even though Ranboo never considered any of the kids at the orphanage his siblings, when he was younger, the relationship felt as close to brotherly as it could as a bunch of orphans. He never rooted for the downfall of the other kids, but if anyone got in trouble for a good reason, well.

He'd be a liar to say that he didn't feel a little bit of glee when that happened.

The tea is almost gone, but he feels a little less wound up. Not enough to have a peaceful night of sleep, but the nerves are wearing off, and he can glance out the back door and see the figures of Wilbur and Tommy leaving the orchard. They're obviously bickering about something, like they always do.

It helps, little by little.

Chapter End Notes

I HAVE BEEN WAITING, excitedly, TO SHARE TECHNO'S MAGIC WITH Y'ALL.
YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW LONG I'VE BEEN WAITING.

I bet it wasn't what you were expecting!! Or maybe it was, maybe. Who knows. But yep! Techno's magic HEALS! Heals him, heals others-- his strength is just something completely else. He's just that cool /hj

Anyway. Compared to the last few chapters this one's a wee bit shorter but also I like having my chapters within a 2k-3k range and not the 3k-4k range I've been putting out for the past few chapters, but I think it's a nice lil' concise update. Haha.

I don't know if Phil has ever said rodeo before. I am American and imagining it is funny so I, the writer of this fic, decided to use my godlike powers and make it happen.

Ranboo please don't forget to write all this down or you'll forget it--

Also, why do I feel like someone's missing? Hm. I don't know. I guess we'll just have to wait and find out in the next chapter :)

See you then! <3

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I Don't Have A Creative Title For This Chapter, But Always Remember Your Seatbelt When You're In A Car

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Sunday morning comes too quickly. Ranboo feels like half of his body is running on autopilot, as it wakes up-- still in his room, thank you, God, but half-off his bed and his neck was going to be sore for the rest of the day-- and he rummages through his clothing, still half-asleep, before he realizes he isn't at the orphanage anymore.

There isn't a sound of a lock in his door, and a voice telling him to get ready for church. It's just himself, standing in front of his dresser, where he's set up a few books that he got the other day when he went to the mall with Phil, and a strange little misshaped pottery project that Tommy told him he could have after he came home from school with it the other day.

He glances down at his hands.

He doesn't *have* to go to church, does he? He doesn't have to get dressed, look presentable for the mass, listen to the sermon, be the best kid he was raised to be by the sisters. He could enjoy a relaxing Sunday morning, one he's--

-- well, he's never had a relaxing Sunday morning. The few times he never went to church on Sunday mornings were times when he was sick. The flu, twice. A stomach bug. None of it had been a relaxing, pleasant Sunday morning because the only reason he wasn't around other people was because he was sick.

Ranboo sighs. He sits back on his bed, glancing at his dresser. He's awake with enough time to go to church. He notices that his newest journal is open on his bed, and looking at it is enough reminder of the events of the night before.

Would it be-- would it be *selfish*, to ask to go to church?

This new home is warm. This new home is nice. Ranboo knows that he shouldn't be afraid to ask for anything, and Phil has been all but reasonable and *kind* and *understandable* with everything, and even though none of the family was religious-- well, if someone was awake, they would be willing to drive him, right?

He leans back into his bed. His neck's a little sore, but not too sore. He hopefully wasn't hanging off his bed for too long, then.

But also-- well, with everything that had happened the night before, it was understandable if anyone's hands were too full. He glances at the digital clock by his bed. It's only a little past six-thirty in the morning, the sun has only begun to grace the horizon, but he knows that someone has to be awake.

Probably not Phil. When Wilbur and Tommy returned last night-- or, well, was it technically earlier that morning, since midnight had long passed by that time-- it wasn't long until the older two ushered Tommy and Ranboo back to their rooms to get some sleep. It was something *adults* could deal with, even though Wilbur is still technically in school too, he was de facto second-in-charge when Phil was gone.

He heard a little bit of noise in the night, and Ranboo assumes it was when Phil got home. He didn't roll over and check the time, though, it was just a small noise. The door opening, probably. But it was in the very early hours of the morning-- probably not too long ago, even, if Ranboo's glance at his own clock was still right-- and he wouldn't want to be a bother.

There is the sound of *life* downstairs. Not a peep from Tommy's room, because Ranboo would definitely be able to hear through that wall if he was awake. If he closes his eyes and concentrates, he can hear Tommy *snoring* through the wall.

Not by any magic means. Tommy was just as loud in his sleep as he was awake.

Still, it wouldn't hurt to try, right?

What's the worst that could happen? Ranboo sits up on his bed.

They could say no, the reasonable voice in his head says. *They could say not today, because of what happened last night.*

They could make fun of you and mock your religion, a more negative voice rings out.

He doesn't like his conflicting thoughts.

Still, he creaks open his bedroom door-- even though he knows Tommy can sleep through seven different alarms, and only wakes up when someone barges into his room and yells directly in his face when he oversleeps-- and carefully tip-toes through the house.

Right, there are two other strangers passed out in the living room. Still, probably, if Techno's healing magic took long to heal. He still isn't sure how it works, but he can probably ask for more information later. Learning about other gifts didn't bring him closer to his own, but it was fascinating to learn about.

And now that he has a new journal that won't be tossed into fire, he can write whatever he wants. He still hides it, though, when he leaves his room. Under his pillow. Like the good ol' days.

To his surprise, the person moving around quietly in the kitchen isn't Phil, or even Techno. It's Wilbur.

"Ayup," he greets. He's drinking a mug of coffee.

"Have... have you slept at all?"

Wilbur glances at the clock over the stove. "Nope." He pops the *p*, for emphasis, before going back to what he was doing. There were a number of books laid out on the table, all

about... Some sort of historical event? All library copies.

Had he been sitting in here reading all night? Had Wilbur pulled an all-nighter to *read* about some random historical event?

Ranboo was impressed. Even though it was barely a week since he was officially adopted, he didn't get to spend too much time with Wilbur. He was a bit more reclusive than Tommy and didn't openly wander around the house like Techno did, or seem to appear exactly when he was needed like Phil did. Wilbur stayed in his room or was out with older friends.

So it was definitely strange to see him *awake*, seemingly unfazed by an all-nighter.

"Is something wrong?" Wilbur glances up from his book.

"Oh, um." He feels his ears burn. "It's a, uh, Sunday, and I was wondering-- well, if you're too busy, that's fine-- but I've never *missed* a Sunday service, and--"

"Church stuff?" Wilbur asks, taking a giant gulp of the coffee. It wasn't even hot anymore, Ranboo could tell. "Right, you came from that orphanage. You need a ride?"

"Oh, uh, yeah, but if it's too much trouble--"

Wilbur is already standing, stretching his long limbs. "It's good, I can take ya. When is it?"

"Well, actually, it's at eight--"

"Cool, I've got time to get ready." He gives Ranboo a warm grin. "Do you want a coffee, too? Or some tea?"

"Oh, uh. Not right now." He's technically not supposed to eat anything before he goes to mass, but he doesn't say anything about that to Wilbur. Instead, he squeaks out, "T-Thanks."

"You're part of the family now, Ranboo." Wilbur stretches out his arms again, and wraps it awkwardly around his shoulder, as a sort of half-hug. "I don't get the church stuff, but if it's important to you, I'll drive you."

Ranboo smiles. It's nice.

The sound of the choir singing is enough to calm his nerves, because, well.

Ranboo just had a very emotional *journey* to get to the church. A sort of mental journey and a very physical journey. He's going to make a note in his journal to write down to not be in the car with Wilbur, alone, after the other pulled an all-nighter and had mixed a five-hour energy into a monster, *driving*.

But the sound of the choir and the cool air of the sanctuary makes up for the absolute nightmare of a ride he had there-- and he was anticipating an absolute nightmare on the way back, if Wilbur didn't doze off in the parking lot. But he had brought one of the thick books

he had been reading at the table, and another mug of coffee, so Ranboo prayed that he would be awake and alert enough to safely drive Ranboo home.

He finds a quiet place in the back of the church. He can see the Sisters and the young children in their usual spot by the front, but he's barely able to make it in as mass starts, and he hides in the back. It's more open in the back, and he takes an awkward seat next to a family with a small child who looks up at him with big eyes and reminds him of Charlie--

He's happy he's able to remember Charlie. She was there for such a short time, but it was enjoyable, at least.

Being alone, in the back of the church, on his own during mass was a different experience. He was not kneeling until his knees ached, holding onto a rosary to contrite for his sins. He was existing, as he was, in the church, not even dressed in his sunday best (he'd put on his nice button-up, but switched the old black dress pants for a pair of black jeans he now had, which looked much nicer, even if they *were* jeans), and it was...

It was the best time he's had at church, ever. He doesn't fully focus on Father Patrick's sermon, but being able to sit in the sanctuary as peacefully as this? It was *nice*.

He notices that Sister Agnes locks eyes with him after the mass. She gives him a small, awkward wave. He nods back.

Even though the mass is done and over as quickly as it usually is, with Ranboo going through the motions, ignoring the sermon, Communion, all that jazz-- he stays, for a moment, in the pew.

The church is quiet. His new home is loud-- it's loud, and it's bright, and it's noisy. Not a bad sort of noise, not the noise of the orphanage that he drowned out every night the moment he got his hands on his old phone and earbuds. It was a good noise, but it felt like hadn't had a chance to sit and *be*.

And here he could.

If you're listening, Ranboo thinks and prays, looking up at the ceiling. There isn't much but hanging lights, but there is a detailed dove stained glass window behind the altar. *If you're listening, Lord... Thank you. Thank you for all of this. Thank you for finally hearing me. I... I finally have a home. I don't think I can thank you enough.*

Even though last night was a whole ordeal, he lets out a content sigh.

The clearing of a throat catches him off-guard, and he glances up to see an old man.

Not just any old man. The beard and flannel and vest--

"Hello again." The man says. His voice sounds just the same as the last time Ranboo heard it.
"Can I sit?"

Ranboo scoots to the side a bit more, to give the man a little room to pray. Why he would ask to sit next to Ranboo, when the entire sanctuary was still open, he didn't know. But the man

was...

... Definitely *something*.

“You look better than last time I saw you.”

“Um, thanks?”

“Yep.” The man sighs, leaning back in the pew. “Beautiful sermon today, huh?”

“Yes.” Ranboo lies.

“Yeah, I don’t pay much attention to Father Patrick’s sermons either.” The man chuckles. “He talks all piously, sometimes it doesn’t connect with folk like me. Or younger folk like yourself. But listening to him talk ain’t the point of mass.”

Well. Ranboo still isn’t sure about what the point of mass *was*, but it felt nice to go to. It was peaceful today, after the last hectic week.

“It’s for Him, really.” The old man points up. “Always for Him.”

Yeah, technically. Ranboo nods. The old man was... weird, but it wasn’t a bad, or creepy weird. It was just an eccentric old man sort of weird.

“You feelin’ like a good person yet?”

“Um.” He hadn’t been to confession in a while, but-- well. He hasn’t had much to confess. Maybe a lie, here or there (like he just did, but the man read him like an open book), maybe he broke a small little promise, but he couldn’t think of anything specifically. And he had helped, last night, with Techno healing the two strangers who were still crashed in the living room when they left that morning. But did he feel like a good person? “I... I don’t know.”

“Well, here’s my advice, eh?” The man leans forward, then stands up. “Even if you don’t feel like anything, putting good out in the world matters more. Even if you don’t think you can do much, just giving a stranger a friendly smile is enough.”

“I... I never thought about it. Like that.”

“It’s a better way of lookin’ at things, I reckon.” The man laughs. “Who am I to say anythin’, though? I ain’t the Lord.”

No, no one was-- Ranboo glances down at his hands for a brief second, and then back up, and-- the man is gone.

Again.

Weird.

By the time Wilbur and Ranboo get back home-- Ranboo needs a good minute outside the car once they get back to recollect himself, the drive back home was just as awful as it was to the church-- the house is a little more awake.

Well, Wilbur isn't. The moment he gets back into the house he goes straight to his room. Ranboo has a feeling he won't be seeing Wilbur for another twelve hours or so, but he hears more movement and life in the kitchen, and he pokes his head in, curious. Phil is awake.

"Good morning, Ranboo!" Phil looks a little... Ragged. His hair is a bit of a mess, and there's a bandage wrapped around his forearm, but he looks alive, and well, and Ranboo supposes that's what matters the most. He's sipping out of a mug, but it looks like something cold. Maybe not coffee. Ranboo doesn't want to ask what it is. "How was, um... Mass?"

"It was fine." He elects to not say anything about the weird man. He's not entirely sure if the weird man is just a figment of his imagination or not, but the memory of tissues in his pockets rings out surprisingly well.

Ranboo takes a hesitant glance towards the living room. He wanted to ask-- he wanted to pry- - but he didn't want to do it explicitly.

"They're still out like lights," Phil says, as he opens the fridge and begins to gather an assortment of foods. Eggs, milk, cheese, and bacon. Looks like he was planning a rather large breakfast. There was already bread out, and the toaster was plugged into the wall. "Want to help with breakfast?"

"Sure."

"It'll definitely wake everyone up." Phil gives him a cheeky wink, and Ranboo chuckles under his breath. Out from one of the lower cupboards, Phil digs out an old, portable radio, and sets it up on the counter, out of the way. He presses a button, and it turns on, humming a song Ranboo doesn't know.

It's a nice song. Ranboo doesn't know the words of it, but he doesn't know most of the songs he's heard since he left the orphanage. It's nice to not have to only listen to the music the nuns approved of. The songs that Wilbur played in the car were nice, and he'd love to listen to them more one day when he's not fearing for his life at the hands of Wilbur's driving.

They fall into a rhythm together; Ranboo has helped make breakfast with the sisters before, and he knows how to make bacon, and scrambled eggs, and toast, even if the breakfast wasn't something they always had. He's never used a cast iron frying pan, but Phil lets him know to be careful so he doesn't burn his hand, and it feels like a peaceful moment.

The slow trickling thaw that sets the banks in half, the sweet melody it makes when the canyons crack...

Ranboo knows that he's got a long week ahead of him-- Phil is supposed to be settling everything with his online classes later that day, though it might need to be pushed around to deal with the current extra tenants sleeping in the living room, but he's said by at least Tuesday, Ranboo is gonna start a few new classes.

It isn't long before they hear a *thud* above them-- Tommy's room is right above the kitchen, Ranboo remembers, as the smell of bacon begins to waft through the house.

Well, it definitely woke someone up.

And it isn't too long until everyone is squeezed around the kitchen table. Well, not *everyone* - - Wilbur was probably still passed out in his room after his apparent all-nighter, but no one made any movements or objections to that, and continued on with life.

One of the strangers-- the one who had been awake, before, who everyone called Sapnap-- had managed to roll off the bed map at the smell of breakfast, too. He looks disheveled, and there's still some dreamon blood (and actual blood Ranboo is electing to pretend is just not *there*) and mud coating his skin, but he doesn't seem too bothered by anything anymore.

He's much more alert and alive now. The other stranger-- *Greg, was it? Oh, Ranboo can't remember names for the life of him*-- was still out cold, still had the shimmer over his skin. But it was gone on Sapnap's now.

Breakfast is quiet, but no one makes the first move to clean up afterwards. Instead, Ranboo notices, everyone focuses on Sapnap, as he clears his throat.

"Alright, uh. Where do I start." He nervously scratches at the back of his head.

"Wherever you want." Even though Phil says it calmly, there's still something in Ranboo that says no one is going to leave the table until they know a little more about what happened last night. Techno takes a sip of his own tea, and Tommy leans in close, intensely staring at the stranger across the table.

Well. Ranboo feels awkward, again. Great.

"It all started out with just a normal hunt..."

Chapter End Notes

The weird man isn't based off anyone particular in the DreamSMP, it's just a random character I came up with earlier in the story and wanted to have pop back up >:3c

ANYWAY, a brief respite before the storm starts to approach. It's like a storm before the horizon. The next and probably final arc is already coming?? I don't anticipate any more than thirty chapters to this story, so the fact that it's going to end soon is freaking me out just as much as I'm sure it's freaking y'all out. But I'll probably write more stories like this! Maybe oneshots of this world, maybe try on different AUs, maybe actually do a Superhero(tm) AU, who knows! I don't! The muse possesses me and holds my family hostage and I have no choice but to comply to demands :')

Sorry if it feels like it's a bit more filler, but again. It's the calm before the storm :)
(I also wanted to show that Ranboo is developing a healthier relationship with his faith
than what he had before dfsafdaf--)

Also yeah Wilbur get some sleep--

As for the chapter I don't have too much else to say! Hope to see y'all soon, and make
sure you have your exit buddy >:)

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I Promise You This Is The Real Update :)

Chapter Summary

CW:

- violence, mentions of blood, fire

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Sapnap groans as he hits the ground. The small little fucker was a speedy little thing, he decides, and even Dream and George are having trouble keeping up with it.

George draws an arrow into his bow and shoots, and even with his astounding accuracy, he misses. He curses under his breath, but it's loud enough for Sapnap to hear.

Dream reaches out a hand to pull Sapnap up. He isn't the oldest of their odd trio, but he definitely has the most experience fighting dreamons-- and, well. He also has the strongest magic, as he reaches into mid-air and pulls out a glowing sword.

Fuckin' reality magic. Sapnap is strong, too, of course-- nothing beats good ol' fire-- but sometimes, Dream just liked to show off, huh?

"Thanks," He says, as Dream nods at him. He always keeps his face hidden behind that silly little mask on hunts, but since the trio moved in together a month ago, seeing it feels weirder than it had before.

George is distracting the dreamon, shooting a few arrows into the air. Not hitting it, but they hit the ground around the creature, and it is definitely enough to distract.

"We need to think of a plan." Dream says. He glances around the forest clearing they're in-- it isn't too far from the little cabin that Puffy's family rents out during the warmer months of the summer to make a few extra buckaroos, and they definitely don't want it causing any damage, or, Sapnap remembers the weeks they spent repairing it by hand last time. He winces at the thought.

"Well, I can always just go in blazing."

"No, please, we don't need the police on our ass again for suspected arson," Dream wheezes, as he fiddles with the air. Sapnap can never see this strange thing he calls his "inventory" like he's some sort of video game character, but Dream does bring out a large battle axe and a few--

"Where the hell did you get bombs?"

"Not important right now--" Dream tosses them back into his inventory, before they're interrupted by George crying out.

"Guys! I'm out of arrows!"

"Ugh, hold on--! Here!" Dream pulls out another bundle of arrows, tossing them to George. He catches them with ease, of course. And starts to shoot again at the dreamon-- this time, getting a hit in.

Looks like its stamina was running out.

"Alright, Sapnap." Dream turns back to him. He juggles the battleaxe in his hand. "No full-out blazing, but if you can light it up enough to disorient it more, I should be able to get the final hit in to kill this thing."

Sapnap grins, and lets out the energy of the sun onto his skin. It only covers his forearms-- no full-out blazing, he can't go all human torch like he likes to do, but they are close to Puffy's cabin and if it catches fire he is never going to hear the end of it and most likely going to have to rebuild it all on his own, and, well, he doesn't know shit about building a cabin from scratch.

Dream's plan works. As they usually do. The dreamon goes down with one swing from the battleaxe, beheaded and black dreamon blood oozing out in a spectacular fountain before it sunk into the earth.

Not purified, but, well. It's dealt with for now.

"Nice hit, Dream!" Sapnap yells out, giving him and George a high-five. "Dream Team, fifty-four, dreamons, zero!"

"I could've sworn this was fifty-five," Dream says.

"It was obviously sixty-nine." George interjects, and they all break out into laughter.

This was supposed to be a simple job.

But it went wrong so quickly.

They were walking back towards the car when something broke behind them. Sapnap heard it first, and his fists lit up in response to the noise, and standing right behind them--

--it was huge." Sapnap didn't look up, instead, focused down on his own hands, which were still coated in dirt and blood. The plate he had just had a joyous breakfast on was long gone, already in the dishwasher.

Ranboo's nerves got the better of him, he had to do something to not just feel like he was sitting at a table awkwardly listening to a story. And he was still listening, or trying to listen, but he didn't lean in out of fear or intrigue or horror like the rest of the people living in the house as he was.

His-- his *family*.

Still a weird thought that Ranboo will unpack later.

Techno didn't have much emotion on his face, but he wasn't looking for something to occupy himself with. He wasn't reaching for one of the places he's most definitely stashed a book he was reading, he was listening intently. Tommy was leaning forward, chewing on the plastic straw he had grabbed to drink his orange juice with, and Phil was listening with a horrified look on his face.

"It wasn't the King, but it looked just as big. And it, um, it was..." The stranger takes a shaky breath. Ranboo is standing awkwardly by the sink, but he's leaning against it and drying his hands. It's more of a habit to rinse the dishes before putting them in the dishwasher, and he'd sprayed some water on himself in the process on accident. "It was really strong. Dream was-- was confident, like he usually was, that we could take it on, but it was much stronger than we thought. It threw George aside like he was a little bug, and it made Dream angry, of course, and he went in a little rashly, and it--"

Oh, shoot, was someone about to die? Ranboo doesn't like how the silence settles in afterwards.

--It took him. It took Dream, and just ran away." Sapnap finishes.

Another beat of silence.

"It... took him?" Phil's brows furrow. Techno runs a hand through his hair to get it out of his face.

"Dreamons don't normally do that, do they?" Tommy asks, leaning back a bit. His face has gone a little pale.

"No, I've never heard of anything like that happening." Phil says. He glances to Techno.

Techno, also, shakes his head. "No, I haven't heard of that, either." He hums.

"Yeah, I-- I tried to chase it down, but I couldn't leave George to bleed out, you know? He had one of your pendants on him so I used it as quickly as I could to get us here, hoping that Techno would be around to heal." Sapnap takes a deep breath. It helps him calm down, a little bit, Ranboo notices, but he looks just like he did when he came in the night before. Frazzled. Disheveled. "I... I don't know what happened to Dream, yet. But he hasn't texted or anything, and I'm getting scared that he might be--"

Phil shakes his head, interrupting Sapnap. "No. Don't give up hope yet. He's one of the strongest hunters I've ever seen come out of our community, he's not going to be taken down as easily as that."

Ranboo wonders what this *Dream* guy looks like. Had he ever walked by him over the summer when he went to the park to hang out with Tommy and Tubbo? Had he ever looked

out the van, on the way to the church, and seen him but not known? Not that faces would be anything to Ranboo, but he can't help but wonder about it.

"You're more than welcome to stay here until George is well enough to move," Phil says. They haven't heard a peep from the living room, and Ranboo assumes he's still asleep. Hopefully not in, like, a coma or anything, but Ranboo is a little afraid to go check.

The last time he had seen someone so peaceful--

He rubs his thumb across the cross around his neck.

"I'll call up some people. Bad, Puffy, you know-- we'll organize a search party to find Dream." Phil says, glancing around at the table. His eyes lock with Techno, who is already standing up.

"I'm going to go check out the ol' books. See if anything like this has ever happened." Techno says. "Dunno how far I'll have to go back, so..." He glances specifically at Tommy, who rolls his own eyes in response.

"Alright, I won't bother ya," The blond says. He glances at Phil. "How can I help?"

"You can stay in the house and not get hurt." Phil smiles back at him, and then back to Ranboo. "You, too, Ranboo."

Right, well, Ranboo didn't plan on getting involved as much as he could in this, anyway. He can barely block a sword. He nods quietly with a faint smile.

"Aw, but *Phil*-- "

"No *buts*, Tommy." Phil points a finger at him, as Techno takes his leave from the kitchen. "You're strong, sure, but you're not strong enough for this, yet, and I don't want you getting hurt."

"But you promised that you'd start taking me n' Tubbo out on more hunts!"

Phil sighs. Sapnap seems to look between the two, Ranboo notices, and quietly gets up from the table to head back to the living room. It was a smart plan, all things considered, and Ranboo was tempted to as well.

He was a newcomer to this magic world. He doesn't even know what his own gifts were, yet, if they were anything extraordinary or just a little more than ordinary. He could barely hold his own up. He just-- well, he didn't pray for a normal life, he quite enjoyed the magic he was surrounded by, but he didn't want to deal with dreamons *yet*. If, at all.

"I know, I promised you that. And I will keep that promise, but..." Phil leans over the table, resting a fatherly hand on Tommy's arm. "Not this. Not now. If this thing has really gotten a hold of Dream, it's much stronger than what we usually have to deal with. I want you, Wilbur, Tubbo, and Ranboo to be safe, you know."

"...I know." Tommy huffs.

"And that's why you and Wilbur are gonna stay home and make sure the wards work when Techno and I aren't here, and..." Phil glances up. He takes a deep breath. "...You can help Ranboo train, too. How about that?"

Ranboo flinches at the sound of his name, but he can't make any response before Tommy sits up with newfound energy and a-- well, Ranoo doesn't like the look on his face. It's impish and mischievous.

Oh, no. He glances at Phil, wondering what sort of deed he had to do to be punished like this. Phil only shrugs in response.

"Oh, Ranboo, my man, you're going to get the best fuckin' training you can this side of the country!" He gets up immediately-- quickly, too, and there's a breeze in the air as he moves, fueled by magic. "You know what? I can probably figure out your magic in, like, the next week! It shouldn't be too hard..."

Ranboo doesn't focus on what Tommy starts to prattle about, instead, turning his focus to Phil, who only mouths a sheepish *sorry* to him.

It starts quickly.

Phil has him set up with online classes the next day, when George is awake and conscious enough to be driven back to the apartment he shares with Sapnap and Dream, and a search party is organized that night. Phil is taking the lead on it.

Ranboo hasn't seen Techno since he left to do research. He wonders how the man's magic keeps him from not needing to sleep, but his online classes distract him enough.

His teacher is Mr. Theo, a young man in his late 20s. He has a few classes with other people, online; lectures that Mr. Theo organizes himself and other teachers from the local high school who sign in on their free time. Ranboo isn't forced to turn on his webcam, isn't forced to speak much, only occasionally so that Mr. Theo can make sure he's there.

Other than that, the work is asynchronous. He doesn't have to deal with other people his own age, but he sees a few have their cameras on during lectures and class discussions, and if he wasn't feeling shy, he would do it, too. But it was all weird, and new, and different, and he's never really been in a class with other students like this before.

Tuesday comes, and after Ranboo finishes a good chunk of his work for the day, he hears the sound of Wilbur and Tommy getting home.

"Ranboo!" Tommy screams through the house. He has to have figured out a way to use his magic to make himself louder, and he knocks on Ranboo's bedroom door, only waiting a second before opening it. "You fuckin' ready for today?"

Ranboo blinks. "Oh, it's-- the thing, is today?"

“Yep! Tubbo’s already outside!” Oh, Tubbo is here, too? Ranboo hadn’t seen him since before the weekend incident, it would be nice to deal with, well. Both Tubbo and Tommy are chaotic, Ranboo knows, but at least there’s a little bit of *chill* with Tubbo’s chaos. “C’mon, big man, even Wilbur’s gonna help today--”

“Okay, okay...” He nervously closes the notebook he was looking at from a previous lecture and gets up. Tommy grabs him by the arm and drags him outside to the backyard, in the same place by the orchard where they had been training before. Where Ranboo had been witness to it.

All the leaves were now vibrant hues of orange, all the fruit had been picked from the trees for the year. He thought he was a patient man, but Ranboo couldn’t help but imagine and wonder what the orchard looks like in spring, when everything comes back to life after a rough winter.

Wilbur is there, sure-- but he’s leaning against a tree with his guitar, strumming a tune Ranboo hasn’t heard. Probably just there for adult supervision, if anything.

Tubbo’s thrown off his school bag by the stairs to the porch and he’s standing in the field with his sleeves rolled up to his elbows, and Ranboo gulps as Tommy drags him over.

“So, um, what are we going to be doing, exactly?”

“You have a *matter* gift like Tubbo here, so he’s going to try and help you figure it out!”

“...How?” He knows that Tubbo is strong, and can take a lot of hits, and is pretty invulnerable. Would they-- would they just toss Tubbo at him, until something happened? He didn’t like the sound of that. Not to mention, Tubbo was glancing up at him with big eyes and didn’t look threatening at all.

“Yeah, *how*, exactly, are you going to figure it out, Tommy?” Wilbur asks, from where he reclines against a tree. He most definitely is going to be enjoying it. Ranboo sighs.

“I’m not as harmless as I look.” Tubbo says, defending himself. He looks harmless, though, but, well, with his magic-- not too harmless. “I would fight God for half a bagel and I would win.”

Ranboo blinks at the comment, but-- well, he has to admit it, but Tubbo is probably right. As strange as it is to think about.

“Well, um.” Tommy pauses.

He didn’t think much past this, did he? Ranboo thinks, looking at the empty face of the blond. Tommy is deep in thought, and the three of them are trying to ignore the mocking laughter from Wilbur, leaning up against the tree still.

“Well, let’s see.” Tubbo interrupts the awkward silence-- and thank goodness for that, Ranboo was worried that Tommy had some sort of short-circuit happening in his brain. “I guess I can just explain my magic a bit? And see if that helps?”

“It’s better than anything Tommy could come up with--”

“Wilbur, shut the *fuck* up!”

“Or what?”

Tommy stomps off towards the trees, leaving Tubbo and Ranboo alone. Tubbo shugs, and looks up at Ranboo. Their height difference was always something Ranboo found quite... not *funny*, but it was the closest word to describe the difference. Tubbo has to crane his neck upwards-- and it’s not like he’s that short, either. Ranboo is just freakishly tall.

“Well, my magic is constantly on.” Tubbo stretches out his arms. There’s no pink glitter like Technoblade had, that’s for sure. “It’s not something I usually notice, but if I pay attention, there’s a little buzz under my skin. And apparently that’s more common with abilities that are matter-based?”

Ranboo nods. He glances down at his own arms. Does he notice a buzzing underneath?

... No. He doesn’t feel anything.

“I dunno if Technoblade feels the buzzing, but I do, and I know someone else who has matter-based magic also does. He’s actually a shapeshifter! You’ll probably meet him at some point.” Tubbo continues. He likes to go off on tangents. It’s a better explanation than he could’ve gotten from Tommy, at least.

Speaking of which, Ranboo glances back to look at the fight that’s broken out between the two brothers. He and Tubbo have taken a few steps away casually, noticing the noise and not paying attention, but Wilbur and Tommy were in an all-out brawl. Tommy was floating in the air and trying to get attacks in, and Wilbur was dodging them easily.

When Tommy tries to get a kick in, Ranboo notices, the skin of Wilbur’s palms is white. Well, yeah, white because he is indeed a white, caucasian man, but it’s paper-white. *His magic?*

When Tommy’s leg meets Wilbur’s hand, ice bursts out and encases the blond’s foot in it.

“Is that ice?”

“Oh, yeah, Wilbur has ice magic.” Tubbo says, turning his head. “He doesn’t like fighting much, but he’s so cool when he does!”

It does look cool-- the ice isn’t blue, like that one animated movie he’s heard so much about, but it’s a pure white color, just like snow. And clear. He can kind-of see Tommy’s pant leg through the ice.

“Fuck you, Wilbur!”

“You’re the one attacking me first, you little gremlin--”

“Anyways,” Tubbo turns back to Ranboo. They take a few steps further away from the fight, just to be safe. “The thing about our kind of magic is that it’s mostly instinctual? Like, it’s just another part of your body.”

He proves this by moving quickly-- Ranboo blinks and Tubbo has picked him up bridal style. Without breaking a sweat.

“Whoa.”

“Yep!” Tubbo says. He has a bit of a devilish grin on his face-- while Tommy may be chaotic, Tubbo is, too, in his own ways-- and he walks around easily holding Ranboo without breaking a sweat. “You see, I feel the buzzing more now that I’m picking you up and stuff, and--”

He’s cut off by the sound of ringing.

It’s not an awful sound-- Ranboo has heard sirens before, and his mind is *back in the orphanage, the sound of the ambulance, Sister Anne’s body being picked up, huddled close and out of the way but he’s so freakishly tall he can see everything*-- but it’s noticeable, and it’s loud. But it’s more of the melodious sound of a church bell, even though there’s an eerie echo to it.

Tubbo nearly drops him at the sound, and the fighting goes quiet immediately.

“Aw, fuck,” curses Wilbur.

Chapter End Notes

While the April Fool's chapter was all fun and games, here's the actual chapter!

So this is what's happening. Dream has been kidnapped????? By dreamons???????? Is he still alive? Is he okay? Who knows :)
I do of course but y'all don't >:3c

I just wanted to speed the chapter up a bit so there's a bit of that here, of time passing, but hey Ranboo is set up in online school now which is nice and he has a cool teacher (literally just picked a random name dfsadffdas), school isn't gonna be that big on the plot anyway but it's important to set things up like that so I don't forget about things like a certain flower I gave Ranboo at the beginning and just completely forgot about--

Look, there's a reason I kinda relate to Ranboo a lot. And it's not just having a bit of a moral backbone of an eclair B)

Annnyyyywayyy, magic reveal! Quick and out of nowhere, but it was bound to happen. So a quick recap for everyone,

Phil-- ????

Techno-- healing

Tommy-- wind

Tubbo-- strength & durability

Ranboo-- it's mind and matter related, don't know yet

And just for added bonus;

Sapnap-- fire

George-- enhanced accuracy (it isn't explicitly said but since it might not come up again I'm gonna drop it here)

Dream-- some kind of reality manipulation?

Also, uh oh. Alarm bells going off. That ain't a good sign.

See you next chapter, which is going to be another interlude! :D

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INTERLUDE II

Chapter Notes

CW:

- gross dreamon shit. A little bit of body horror.

(also the interlude is a lil shorter, sorry, but it's literally a next-day, special easter update so B))

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wilbur is calm.

Not calm and stoic like Technoblade can be, sometimes, not the fatherly calm Phil seems to radiate most days-- no, he feels emotions on the regular.

Maybe a little too deeply. Maybe it's from being raised by Phil his whole life. Emotions, deepness, all that. But where Tommy is energetic, chaotic, Wilbur is calmer.

He can still be a lil' shit sometimes because messing with people is fun, but for the most part, he's calmer than his younger brother and his younger brother's friend.

Well, maybe not Ranboo. But Ranboo was calm but with anxiety, which is a little different.

But he's calm.

Even when the bells ring to warn them that one of the wards have been broken, the melodious song he created himself, maybe he didn't have to be extra with a little tune, but Phil had asked him with help and even though his magic is *ice* and not *sound* (a cold irony), he happily obliged.

Still, the tune is haunting, and even though he's calm, he still feels his heart drop.

Tubbo, who had picked Ranboo up-- for whatever goddamn reason, Wilbur was too busy fighting a child-- almost drops him, and the taller boy looks confused by the sound. But Ranboo is easy to read. Too easy. Confusion and fear is plastered across his face.

"That was the one by the garage, right?" Tommy asks. He's still got a bit of ice around his foot, but it's melted considerably, probably a mixture of the child getting the little bit of what's left of warm air to it and the fact that Wilbur didn't *freeze* the ice, he just created it to stop the kick.

"Yes, it was." Wilbur listens closely. The tune is haunting. He can't see around to the garage. Maybe it isn't too bad. Maybe it's just a small little thing, like the ones that were digging in

the trash by the grocery store the other day or a little pest wandering too far from home.

“Tommy, you have the most mobility out of all of us, so get onto the roof and tell me what you see.” He’s not used to fighting that much. He doesn’t like it that much, in all honesty. Killing a dreamon gets its blood everywhere, makes it easier to reform. Purifying it is another thing, something that only Phil has mastered with his own magic and has enchanted other objects to do. He needs to go find something in the house.

“Tubbo, Ranboo, get inside.” Ordering makes his mouth feel salty, and he doesn’t like it, but when Phil *and* Techno are out of the house, he’s the de facto adult, unfortunately-- at least if he’s gone, now, it’ll be Ranboo before Tubbo before Tommy. But he knows Ranboo has all-but two experiences with dreamons, both of them ending--

Well, not terribly. But he wasn’t fighting them either time. Tommy remembered his pendant on that day and thank fucking god he did, and the other time Techno smited the thing that had been possessing one of his caretakers. He’s never had to actually *deal* with a dreamon like this, and Wilbur can see, even from a few paces away, the anxiety that is--

Tommy screams. They can barely see over the roof of the house, but he’s obviously been spotted. Not one for stealth, ironically, when he can use the air to make himself as quiet as a mouse--

“You’ve got to be fucking *kidding* me--”

And of course, another tune starts to play. Another ward was breached.

“Nevermind, Tubbo, go help Tommy deal with the one by the garage.” Tubbo nods-- he’s set Ranboo down by now, and Ranboo looks like he’s about to collapse from shaking. It isn’t terribly noticeable, but he looks like he’s about to cave in on himself.

There’s a small buzz in the air. It’s the buzz of magic that Wilbur usually hears, the buzz that *anyone* can hear if they really try, not just of their own magic but of magic everywhere, and it’s definitely coming from Ranboo himself. Phil told him to make sure Tommy was gentle with his training, which wouldn’t have been a big deal since Tommy hadn’t clearly known anything of what he was going to do, but magic was sensitive, and Ranboo was being exposed to a lot at once.

They didn’t want a repeat of the frozen pool incident.

“Alright, Ranboo, come with me.” He wraps his hand around the younger teen’s wrist, not giving him a choice as he drags him through the back door. He makes sure to shut the sliding glass door, and for good measure, allows ice to coat through it. Enough to at least be a warning sign if something were to enter, but the other dreamon was in the orchard somewhere. Not a big problem.

“What’s-- what’s happening?”

“Just a bit of a lil’ attack from a dreamon. No need to panic.” Nope, no need to panic at all, even though he could hear Tommy using incredibly colorful language that Wilbur swears he

didn't teach him through the house. He's bolting for Phil's office.

Surely, he can find something there to purify the dreamon.

"You-- you kinda sound a little, uh, panic-y." Ranboo follows him closely. Probably not good to leave him alone, but also, Ranboo is definitely not good to be anywhere near a dreamon attack like this.

"Phil and Techno are usually around to deal with this." Wilbur explains, opening the drawers to Phil's desk. Anything he could use should be marked with an amaryllis. He digs through it. Pens, loose stones and charms, and eventually finds what he needs. It's a small knife, not big enough to be a dagger but carefully crafted with a handle decorated with amaryllis flowers.

It glows when he grabs it. It's not a long-range weapon like he would've preferred, but Tubbo or Tommy could get use out of it.

"Oh, that makes sense."

He nods. He glances around the room. Is there anything else, long-range? Most of the purifying weapons go to Technoblade. Because, well, he's an actual hunter, like Phil once was, like Dream and his friends are, like a few other people Wilbur knows of in the community. Those who take on dreamons to protect others.

A noble, worthy duty, not one Wilbur was cut out for in the slightest. For one, he can't stomach the smell of dreamon blood, and even though most of it is cleared up with purification, there's still some of the gross black stuff left over. And he just isn't up for fighting.

He finds another amaryllis pendant. It's more lightweight than the one he has tied in a cord around his neck, so he assumes it's a weapon and channels his energy into it. The energy glows and it forms into a misshapen short sword.

Probably why it was in the back of the desk. The blade is bent at an awful angle, it doesn't look sharp at all. He pulls the magic out and tosses it aside.

A large crash outside doesn't sound good, and Wilbur groans at the sound of glass shattering. The small blade will have to do.

"Ranboo, stay... put." Wilbur says. Ranboo nods, his eyes wide, and he tenses in place immediately. Definitely not good to leave him alone. "If I'm not back in five, you have Phil's phone number. Call him and tell him what's up."

"G-got it," Ranboo says, and Wilbur ducks out of the office and immediately smells dreamon blood.

It smells disgusting. He hates it. Still, he leaves out the front door and finds Tommy and Tubbo face-to-face with a two-headed dreamon. It towers above them slightly, with long limbs, and it's bigger than Wilbur expects. The two necks melt into each other, creating an awful, horrifying braid of dreamon mass and dreamon blood, but they split apart again.

There's an invisible mass of air between the dreamon and the two younger boys. Tubbo has his arms crossed over his chest in a defensive position, and he's in front of Tommy. It doesn't seem to be like too much protection, the smaller boy as a meat shield, but they all know how many hits it takes to take down Tubbo.

Kind of. They've never tried to reach his limits. Probably for the best.

"Ay, Wil! You get the thing?"

"I only found this." He holds out the blade by the handle. He doesn't want to be the one to get in close to the dreamon, but he's the *adult*. He doesn't want to ask literal children to fight for him.

Even though he's technically *still a child*, or whatever, he's a senior. He's graduating. He's taking a gap year to focus on music next year. That's adult *enough*.

"Oh, what, are we gonna butter up some toast for this fuckin' thing?" Tommy taunts, anger rising in his voice. The dreamon attacks the air barrier, and there's an awful cracking sound. He notices his younger brother struggling to breathe.

Magic is powerful. Magic is gentle. But if they're not careful enough, it can have adverse effects at their limits. Wilbur knows, the pool incident left him with no feeling in his fingers for months, they were convinced he might've gotten hypothermia from it. Tommy's chest is struggling under the weight of holding air up to keep them safe.

He sighs.

"Alright, Toms. I want you to fly up and be a distraction for one of the heads. Tubbo, you grab the attention of the other, run circles on the ground. And I'll try and cut a clean path to stab the thing." He tosses the knife up into the air, catching the handle tactfully.

Cool, that worked, I was worried I was gonna cut my hand open.

"Got it!" Tubbo breaks out into a run towards the dreamon's feet the moment Tommy lets down the barrier. He breathes easier instantly, and jumps up with a bit more vigor than he had before. He's a natural with wind, he's gotten too many of his ideas for it from that one animated show but it's helped Tommy a lot to learn his magic.

And Wilbur?

Well, when Frozen came out, maybe he enjoyed the animation a little bit too much. The best sources of inspiration can come from anywhere, he finds, and he feels the ice magic pool from his feet as he runs towards the dreamon. It spreads onto the fading-green grass and freezes it under the ice, creating a safe pathway for his magic. An extension of his magic. *The cold doesn't bother him anyway--*

The dreamon's two heads get confused immediately when Tubbo and Tommy start taunting it. Tubbo runs in circles around the entirety of the beast's body, while Tommy starts doing

some weird dance in the air to the other head, ducking out of lunges from it. The body looks like it would split in two if they were pulled at anymore, but it's surprisingly stable.

They're getting stronger, a worried voice in the back of his head says as he dodges a swipe from the creature. It has six legs. Gross. But none of the attacks are centered on him-- it's losing balance easily with the loud distraction of Tommy and Tubbo, which is good. But it's bigger than any of the ones that have wandered past the wards before.

If this is what hunters take on and consider easy, well. Wilbur definitely isn't cut out for that. But he can take it down-- he has to, to protect his family. Tommy. Tubbo. *Ranboo*.

He jumps to allow a clean path for Tubbo to run through with the circles, and gets up to the body of the dreamon and plunges the small knife as deep as it can go. He's never been up and close with a dreamon before, and other than the strange sludge-like blood gunk that makes him want to gag that covers the creature's whole body, it feels like there's a layer of some sort of *fur* underneath. But it feels like wet moss. And not the kind you want to melt into and decompose into to forget the harsh realities of the world.

The kind that's covered in gross mud and *shit* after a rainstorm. Not pleasant.

A bright light erupts from the blade, and Wilbur closes his eyes as the dreamon explodes into a white light.

He's going to be covered in dreamon blood, but luckily, Tommy and Tubbo are spared the pain.

All for being an adult, at least.

"Take that, you fuckin' dreamon!" Tommy lands in the grass as Wilbur leans down to pick up the dropped knife. It's got a little bit of enchantment left in it. Good.

"Nice going, Wilbur!" Tubbo says, running up to his side. He gags. "Gross, I forgot how bad dreamons smell!"

"I'm going to have to take a bath in tomato juice, aren't I?" Wilbur groans. He knows Techno can and *will* take long baths after particularly long hunts. And well, they have two bathrooms in the house, but a lot of people share them and he isn't a fan of the pink-haired man's three-hour baths.

"Yeah, you smell worse than that time I got sprayed by that skunk!" Tommy laughs at his pain. He has half a thought to chase after the younger boy, element of surprise, and give him a hug to rub off some of the dreamon blood. But he knows Tommy is faster, and already a decent foot away.

"Shut the fuck up." Wilbur retorts.

He pauses.

"Hey, um. Was that like, some mixture of both the dreamons, or...?"

“Both?” Tubbo repeats.

They’re silent for a minute.

There’s still a melody in the air.

“Fuck.”

They run into the house immediately. Obviously, they don’t know *where* the second dreamon is. But Ranboo--

They need to make sure he’s safe, right? He’s the baby of the family. Even if he’s older than Tommy, he’s the baby in terms of experience. This is only his third dreamon incident, and they’ve all happened so quickly, and he was looking overwhelmed--

Wow, Wilbur really needs to pull back on his brother instincts.

“Ranboo? You alright?” He yells into the house.

There’s a brief moment of pause. Silence. No response.

“Ranboo?” Tubbo yells. Tommy bolts for the stairs, while Wilbur pokes his head into Phil’s office.

There’s glass on the floor. The large window is broken.

“Shit. Fuck. Damn it.”

Ranboo’s new phone is on the ground, mid-calling Phil.

“Oh, hello, Ranboo--”

“It’s not Ranboo, it’s me, Phil. You need to get back home now.”

“Is everything alright, Wil?”

“There’s-- ah, shit, watch it, Tommy!-- been some dreamon shit happening. Two-- two attacks. We’ve got one down, but the other one is really-- Tubbo, look out!-- going hard at us.”

“Alright. I’m on my way back.”

“Also, uh. Ranboo’s just straight-up disappeared.”

“What?!?”

“Just-- ah-- get back here as fast as you can!”

Click.

Chapter End Notes

HOW DO YOU LOSE RANBOO HE'S LIKE 6'6" HE'S SO TALL I--

Happy Easter y'all, if you celebrate! Or if you don't happy Sunday! I have this interlude done, thought it'd be fun to double-update to celebrate today, whether or not you're religious. I hope you have a nice day :)

Uh oh. Things are getting worse. I wonder...

If Ranboo...

Is okay...

:)

[twitter](#)

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Who Could've Seen This Coming?!

Chapter Notes

all of us could've seen this coming

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

There's a moment, Ranboo notices, right as his head turns as the glass window behind him shatters, where the world seems to slow down and *stop*.

He can see the dreamon, not the one in the front of the house, he assumes, because he can still hear the muffled sound of fighting and Tommy screeching about something or other, and the cries of the other dreamon as it is hit. It's small, not small like the squirrel but it isn't any bear-size, either. It's probably closer to what resembles a deer, but instead of hooves, they're hands. *Human* hands, or something akin to them. Monkies, maybe?

He can see it, reaching through the window. The eyes are all black, like the rest of its body, but there's a white reflection in the eyes or the white in its eyes is its pupils, either way, Ranboo doesn't like being this close to it when it's reaching out for him.

No, no, no, God, please, get me out of here, lead me to safety--

Ranboo forgets about the phone in his hand, the one he's mid-calling Phil because, well. Wilbur told him to call Phil if they're not back in five minutes and he isn't good at keeping time but if there's *two* on the property, they should really get help, right? Plus it was probably five minutes anyway. And Ranboo was left alone. All by himself. To panic.

It only makes sense he would call Phil quickly, because he doesn't know what else to do. And Wilbur and Tommy and Tubbo can get angry at him all they want-- he doesn't care-- he *does* care, actually, he wants to have good relationships with his new family-- but they needed someone more, um. Trained to kill these things or whatever. Wilbur left with a small dagger that looks like it should've been a butterknife to kill the dreamon, *they need all the help they can get*.

A moment, of pause. Where the world seems to slow and pause. Right as he's recoiling, trying to get back away from the grasp of the dreamon's too-human ugly awful hands, and he feels it.

It feels like a string has been looped through his chest and around his heart, and there's a tug at his core and the world goes all different shades of color but they're all wrong. Everything turns neon green and bright blue and pale pink and red and purple for not even a second.

Vwoop--

And the next thing Ranboo knows, he's hit the ground harshly, stumbling after the tugging in his chest stopped.

This is it, I'm dead, I'm dead, I've been eaten, I hope no one reads my new journal--

There isn't any pain.

Well, there is, but it doesn't feel like he's being killed. It feels more like a twig digging into his side.

Now that he thinks about it, the growling of the dreamon going for him and the sounds of fighting outside have ceased. He keeps his eyes closed, but underneath him feels more like the leaf-covered forest floor than the stomach of a monster who devoured him. He feels the leaves, the damp dirt underneath, and even the root of a tree.

Ranboo dares to open an eye.

He's not in the office, anymore, that's for sure. The colors that were weird for a second are back to normal. Large trees with colorful orange leaves loom above him and decorate the forest floor. It's not a clearing, per say, but there is a little bit of an open patch in the woods where the late afternoon sun hits it at the right angle, and it shines on the floor and on his pant legs, which, he looks very much not-eaten.

Which is good.

Where am I?

That is bad.

He stands up slowly, leaning up against the tree for support. His head is buzzing. Everything feels like it's buzzing, like--

Like Tubbo said.

Though, his head is a mixture of buzzing *and* thumping. Probably not good, but the forest around him was silent. There were a few animals rustling around in the leaves, and he could see a bird's nest in the branches of one of the trees, long-abandoned by the change of the seasons. There is the sound of nature all around him, but the natural kind.

No dreamons. No danger.

He lets out a sigh of relief. He's safe, he thinks. He hopes. He prays. *Please, God, please let me be safe.*

Ranboo glances around in the trees. He definitely doesn't know *where* he is, though.

That is *very* bad.

He can wonder and ponder how in the world he got to where he was *later*, because he didn't want to be alone out in the woods for much longer than he needed to be. Whatever magic that

brought him here-- be it, his heart skips a beat at the thought, *his own*, or other magic, or the wards, for whatever reason-- didn't seem too keen on giving him an easy path back.

The trees around him aren't of the ones in the orchard. He doesn't know how far back the orchard goes, he's never been through them fully, only partially, but they are obviously not any that bear fruit. But they resemble the ones that are a bit further back, so hopefully he isn't too far from home.

He has a few options. He can walk in one direction and hope for the best, or try and climb a tree and see if he can see anything. Or he can just sit, wait, and cry, and--

Oh! His phone!

Ranboo reaches for his pocket.

It's empty.

Must've dropped it, then. He thinks, sighing. He can't call for help. He can't cry out for help. Nobody would come.

Ranboo has three options, still. He glances up at the tree he leaned against just a few moments ago. The tree has a branch low enough that he could climb onto, if he pushes himself enough, and a decent few that look sturdy enough to hold his weight a little further above the treeline.

He's never climbed a tree before, but he doesn't want to be sitting out in the woods, alone, when there's dreamons around, and he would much prefer to get back home until dark, so he reaches for the branch and slowly pulls himself up.

It's in climbing the first branch that Ranboo realizes he needs to work on his upper-body strength, but luckily he's able to pull himself up on top of it and it holds him. He may be super lanky, but the weight is distributed... Pretty evenly.

How long has it been since I've last seen a doctor? He thinks, carefully climbing up another branch. *Too long, probably,* he replies to himself.

He climbs another, and another, and it isn't too long until he can see perfectly over the treeline. His head is still thumping a bit-- the sort of headache that feels like it goes along with your heartbeat, *ba-thump ba-thump-ba-THUMP*-- but he wraps his arms the best along whatever he can find to hold himself up.

The tree is on top of the crest of a small hill, which gives him more height than he thought it would. If he squints, he can see a bit of town, way-off in the distance. But it's a clear day, and he can spot the orchard and *home* in the distance.

Home. He doesn't know how he got out this far, all of a sudden, in the blink of an eye, but he could see it. That was good enough, it filled him up with hope, and he just wanted to get back as quickly as he could. He wanted to feel the warmth of the home again, the safe place behind

the wards that protected them. The soft sheets of his bed. The smell of something cooking in the kitchen. Laughter. Warmth. *Warmth*.

Ranboo feels the tree branch crack under him.

Uh-oh.

He doesn't know what magic brought him that far out. He doesn't want to think about it-- well, it probably was his own magic, but what was it? How did it work-- he just wants to go home.

The image of *home* pops up in his mind, again. The back porch. The kitchen. The living room. *The kitchen--*

The tree branch underneath him cracks again and gives out, and he feels himself falling for a brief second, through the air. It would just add to the list of unfortunate events happening to Ranboo that day. If he survives the fall, at least, he can imagine it'll be a fun story to tell. And he knows he'll probably survive. Maybe he'll break something, but he knows which direction *home* is in--

And then it happens again.

The colors swirl around him, changing, like a kaleidoscope. Things blink black for a minute.

Vwoop--

Crash.

"Easy, there, Ranboo--"

Phil? Is that Phil?

"Yeah, it is."

Ranboo's eyes flutter open slowly. He's... he's on the couch. Not in the woods anymore.

"You hit your head pretty hard, mate."

There's something cold on his head. Is it an ice pack?

"Technically, it is ice." He can see Phil's face. He's leaning down by the couch. His eyes are full of concern. He can't tell much else, though. Ranboo grabs at the cloth he feels on his head, and notices that, well. Phil was right, technically it was ice on his head. A literal block of ice, wrapped in a dish rag.

"Huh...?"

"Wilbur made it for you after you hit the table." Phil explains. *"Is your vision blurry, at all? Does your head hurt?"*

His head was-- it was buzzing. And hurting, a little bit.

“Alright, okay. What happened, Ranboo? If you don’t mind me asking?”

“I- um. I don’t know.” He says. The living room is empty, but he can hear voices in the kitchen, talking about something. Grumbling. He can’t tell who, but he expects Tommy. “I think… I think it might’ve been my magic.”

“Oh?” He notices the way Phil’s eyes widen, and sparkle, ever so slightly. His voice shakes, too, but not with nerves or anxiety like Ranboo’s usually does, but with… Excitement.

Ranboo nods, moving the ice slightly on his head, but it makes a sharp pain stab him. He winces.

“Yeah, you got yourself a nice goose egg there,” Phil says, with a bit of a laugh. “Techno said he’ll heal it, once we’re sure you don’t have a concussion.”

“Do I have a concussion?”

“Well, let’s see. Are you confused, dazed, can you see clearly, feel like you’re going to throw up?”

“A little, no, yes, no?”

“Might be from magic, then.” Phil smiles. Ranboo nods-- he’s usually in a state of confusion, he has poor memories, those aspects really aren’t helpful in determining if he has a concussion or not. “I’m sure you’ll be fine, either way.”

“Okay… Cool.” Ranboo slowly lifts off the ice from his forehead. It stings and aches, but now that he knows it’s there, he’s moving a bit more carefully. “Um. What happened?”

“Well, I got a call from Wilbur saying that dreamons had attacked and you went missing. Techno and I drove home as fast as we could and took care of the dreamon that we thought took you somewhere, but when we purified it, well-- you weren’t anywhere.” Phil leans against the side of the couch, stretching out his legs on the ground. His bangs are tied out of his face with a braid.

Ranboo wants to learn how to do that, but he stays quiet to hear Phil’s story.

“And as we’re recollecting ourselves in the kitchen, after cleaning off dreamon gunk, all of a sudden-- *vwoop*, you fell onto the table.” Phil chuckles. “You were a little out of it there, so I brought you into the living room so the other kids could clean up the mess you made.”

There’s a faint, “*Fuck you! I’m not a child!*” yelled from the kitchen, and laughter. Neither of them address it.

Home. It feels good to be home-- home, like his bedroom, the living room, the mismatched decor. His-- his family. He’s written an entire page in his journal about how weird it is to call them his family already, how unusual it feels on his tongue even just thinking about it, but

how right it feels at the same time. It's a feeling he can't explain, but Ranboo revels in it for a moment.

He glances to the other side of the living room for a moment. Just a moment, noticing the way the shadows fall with the sunlight coming in through the window, and--

The colors shift and change around him again, and--

Vwoop.

Suddenly he's sitting over there, instead.

Phil blinks at him, wide-eyed in confusion. Ranboo is probably mirroring the same look.

“What the fuck, you can teleport?”

He dropped the ice after the *vwoop* and sees it hit the couch where he was just sitting. It doesn't look like it even melted at all in his hands.

“Is that what I'm doing?”

A beat.

Phil bursts out into laughter. Loud, emotional, just like the rest of the family. Either way, he stands up and walks over to Ranboo with an outstretched hand, and pulls him to his feet.

“Yep.” He gives Ranboo a pat on the back. “I've never heard of anyone with teleporting magic, oh boy. Training you is gonna be rough.”

“S-Sorry.”

“Don't apologize, you can't control your gifts.” Phil says. “Hey, Techno? Ranboo's awake!”

There's the sound of something being set down in the kitchen, and Techno's head peeks nervously through the hallway. His hair is a mess, but there isn't any dreamon blood in it, still. He has glasses on that nearly fall off his face, but he pushes them back up and slowly enters the room.

“No concussion, I'm assuming?” Techno asks, pushing some of his hair out of his face. He forcibly moves Ranboo to sit back down on the couch.

“Probably not,” Phil replies. “I mean, if he does have one, he doesn't have a lot of symptoms.”

Techno nods, pushing up his already rolled-up sleeves. His hands are sparkling with the pink healing magic again. Ranboo didn't think he would be on the receiving end of it so soon, but he can't help but recoil a bit back.

“Relax, it won't hurt.” The pink-haired man rolls his eyes, before glancing at Phil. “Fine, I'll heal up internally, too, just to be safe.”

Phil smiles at him. Techno places his hands around Ranboo's temples, steering clear of the bruise that pained his forehead. The feeling of the magic was... Weird. It smells like mint and orange, and it feels like someone poured soda over his head. Only the fizzy part of soda, and it sinks into his skin and it feels like soda under his skin, too, but the pain in his forehead was gone, at least.

It also feels like a decent amount of whatever energy he had left drained immediately, too. The buzzing under his skin has finally stopped, at least-- hopefully, that means he's too tired to use *his magic*.

His magic--

"You're probably gonna be a little drowsy," Techno explains, standing back up. And Ranboo sure does. "Though you're technically okay to go to sleep now, if you had a concussion it's gone, at least stay awake enough to get dinner."

"Dinner?" Ranboo repeats. His stomach growls a bit. When was the last time he had food?

"It's tacos."

"You can fuckin' *what*!?"

"Tommy, please, keep your voice down at the dinner table." Phil groans, pinching the bridge of his nose.

"Oh, right, sorry. Mr. Phil. Completely forgot that we were eating dinner." Tommy remarks, sitting back in his chair. He's on his third taco, and doesn't look close to stopping.

Tubbo is on number seven.

Ranboo's had two, already, and it's a strange, sort of buffet-style taco line, but there's still a lot of meat and both hard shells and soft wraps left to grab, along with all the necessary toppings for a taco. Lettuce, tomatoes, cheese, salsa. Ranch and strawberry jelly, for some reason.

He hasn't looked Tubbo in the eye since he wolfed down the strawberry jelly taco. It was some school dare that Tommy filmed. He didn't want to question it.

"It's not as if I just found out some pretty big information about my lil' *brother*, or anything." The sass is strong with Tommy.

Brother?

It immediately tugs on his heart. Sure, Ranboo had called them his family before. And legally, they are his family, are they not? Technoblade adopted him, Phil had all the papers, and if Wilbur and Tommy were the sons, then that would mean that Ranboo was brothers with them, too, and vise-versa. Still, hearing it--

"Oh, don't you start crying 'bout that, Ranboo. I don't need another Wil."

“Hey!” Wilbur glances up from his phone. There wasn’t a no-phones-at-dinner rule, but if there was, Wilbur would be breaking it every night. Phil seems happy to just have Wilbur at the table. “Shut up.”

“No-way, big brother.”

“Shut up or I *will* start crying.”

“Ranboo’s older, though.” Tubbo speaks up. It’s strange that he remembers that detail, but he’s also been eating a lot of tacos at an inhuman pace. Something about his magic, Ranboo remembers, but no details about it. “Isn’t he?”

“Wait, you *are*?!”

“Yes-- I thought you knew this.”

“No, I didn’t!” The table breaks out into laughter, Wilbur laughing the hardest. Techno doesn’t, but he rolls his eyes. “I’m still the *youngest*?!”

“Woe is you, Thomas.” Technoblade says. There isn’t a no-books-at-dinner rule, either, and he’s already buried deep into a book that Ranboo doesn’t recognize, mostly because the old leather cover looks worn off from time. *“Thus not the tenderness of friendship, nor the beauty of earth, nor of heaven, could redeem your soul from woe.”*

“What.” Tommy blinks at him. The meat in his taco slides out slowly.

“No, wait, I think I know this...” Wilbur shakes his hand in the air, for a second. It looks like it’s on the tip of his tongue. “Frankenstein!”

“Yep.”

“Wait a second, I have a question.” Tubbo sits up. “...If Techno adopted Ranboo, does that mean Tommy is technically Ranboo’s uncle?”

A beat of silence. Techno, in the middle of sipping water out of a wine glass, lets the small brunet’s question sink in and suddenly chokes on the water and spits it out. Wilbur and Phil both break out into laughter, the kind of choking laughter that is hard to calm down from.

Ranboo feels the pain of the sudden realization, and he doesn’t need to see the details in Tommy’s face to see he is just as pained as he is.

“Oh my god, I didn’t think about that.” Techno says, setting his book down on the table. He doesn’t worry about bookmarking it, he probably remembers what page he leaves off on.
“Oh, god.”

“Congrats, Techno! It’s a boy!” Wilbur says with a devilish grin.

Techno glances up at Phil, who is still choking on laughter. “Phil, I’m not ready to be a father yet---”

“But you’re old enough--” Phil can hardly make it out between his laughter.

“No, I’m not ready for this responsibility yet. I don’t want kids. Oh, god, what do I do?” He rests his face in his hands.

“So, *Ranboo*-- ”

“I am not calling you Uncle Tommy.” Ranboo says.

“Ey, respect your elders!”

“I’m-- I’m *literally* older than you, we *just* went over this!”

Tubbo revels in the chaos he has created with a too-innocent grin, because of course he does.

“I don’t want no nephew of mine talking back to me like this. Techno, control your son!”

Techno doesn’t respond, instead he just goes, “Ohhhhhh.....” and groans, face still in his hands.

It’s good to be home.

(And it’s better when Phil manages to stop laughing and clarifies that the papers were still legally in his own name and not Techno’s, a little magical trick of the light, and Ranboo was legally *his* son.

Plus Techno doesn’t have any actual legal papers.

For *some* reason.)

Chapter End Notes

HI I AM RIDING OFF THE ADRENALINE OF GETTING MY COVID VACCINE
IM SO LUCKY I WAS ABLE TO GET IT AND GET THE J&J ONE BECAUSE I
HAVE AN INTENSE FEAR OF NEEDLES BUT I DID IT AND I HOPE YOU
READERS CAN GET IT SOON TOO IF YOU'RE ABLE TO SO WE CAN ALL DO
OUR JOB TO GET OUT OF THIS PANDEMIC!!!!!!

Ahem. Anyway, back to the escapism of minecraft roleplay fanfic. I'm sure you all saw this coming that Ranboo's first gift is teleportation. I mean, I CAN'T NOT give it to him, he's the biggest enderman kin I've ever seen--- But yeah!! No one knows how teleportation magic works because Ranboo's Ultimate Main Character Energy is so overpowering that even Phil has never heard of that kind of magic before, so training is gonna be fun B)

(Also IDK if you've noticed but everyone who guessed teleportation last chapter got a response of cheeky  because I am just like that teehee)

I'd also like to give a shout-out to KrazyCat6171 who commented about the interaction I made at the end, like, on chapter 13 or so. I thought it was too funny to not try and squeeze in, and Tubbo being the cause of the chaos makes it 1000% funnier. So again, shoutout to you, dear reader! :D

I would also like to add I am getting close to finals so updates might slow a bit (this semester has gone by so quickly pls send help) but I am determined!! To finish this!!! Not just so I can focus more on Ordinary(ish) People but this is gonna be the first fanfic I ever have finished and I want it to be good B)

So see you guys next chapter, whenever that may be! Hopefully soon!

[twitter](#)

[tumblr](#)

(EDIT: hi if you're reading this I'm noticing quite a few comments mentioning how the ice didn't melt, that was Wilbur's magic, not from Ranboo. Sorry if it was a lil' confusing!)

Note To Self; Don't Trust Phil's Ideas

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Everything in Ranboo's life has gotten strange since he first met Tommy when--

Well, he doesn't know what to count as *meeting* them. They technically interacted before, at the grocery store-- and maybe even before that, at the park or something, they could have seen each other before, but Ranboo wouldn't remember that, and they didn't know of each other's existence at that point, but he first got their names, and repeated them in his head after that, so he wouldn't forget.

Tommy. Tubbo. *Tommy and Tubbo. Tubbo and Tommy.*

Whatever that meeting was-- His plan, maybe, or just some twist of fate-- everything has become much stranger in his life at an exponential rate. Most of it was things that he tried to brush off. Magic, well, yes, that was definitely interesting and world-view-changing, but he's getting used to it.

...Somewhat.

Finding Tommy floating a few feet off the ground in the kitchen to get something from the top shelf that he can obviously reach if he stretches, but doesn't cause he's lazy-- that's always a shock. Wilbur doesn't use his magic that much, but Ranboo notices that the strange chest-freezer they have nestled in the corner of the kitchen is filled with ice and ice cream and what looks like meat and fish, is never plugged in but always cold. Any drinks Wilbur serves usually have ice in it that doesn't melt, even if it's left out in the sun.

Techno's magic works differently. No one's really explained it to him past, well. Healing. He assumes it heals Techno too, because Techno comes home from hunts and the search party that is organized for that missing guy-- Dream?-- without any big wounds.

And then there was Phil. The mysterious father, the man who saw that Ranboo needed a home, and took him in as soon as he could. Who forged *legal documents* in order to do so, when the orphanage threatened his family with a restraining order. Who fought for not just Ranboo, but his entire family.

Who first extended the zoo trip to him, all those months ago. It was months-- it was in the summer, wasn't it?

Halloween is in two weeks.

Time has passed weirdly. Quickly. But also, agonizingly slow.

Despite all the time he's been in this new world, which always has constant surprises to him, he hasn't learned about Phil's magic.

It feels too awkward to bring it up. Like, *hey, what kind of magic do you do? What's your gift?* He doesn't know why, but Tommy has been the only one who has outwardly said what his magic (and Tubbo's) was. Ranboo found out through seeing it, for the most part. Seeing Wilbur's ice, seeing Techno heal.

So sitting down outside on one of the last warm days they'll be getting a while across from Phil is....

... Definitely not what Ranboo was expecting. He should know better now.

Phil takes a deep breath and smiles. "Alright, mate."

There wasn't a search party organized for that day-- or one that Phil would be on, at least. They were still searching, with the hope that the guy Dream was still alive somewhere, but it's been-- Ranboo can't remember, time feels weird, but it was barely more than a week, he thinks at least-- an uncomfortably long time to find someone alive.

Ranboo has heard the hushed conversations, when he walked downstairs to the pantry to get a snack in the middle of his classes. *We've looked there, here, and everywhere, no sight of him, don't know where he could be, we could go further out, where--* but nothing that he can remember well.

Curse his poor memory.

"Your magic... Well, it's not like anything I've ever seen." Phil glances over to the orchard. It's technically a school day, but Ranboo didn't have too much work to go through, and Phil grabbed him the moment he could. "And I've seen quite a bit-- not just because I'm old, either." He gives Ranboo a sideways smirk.

Ranboo tries to resist rolling his eyes at the comment.

"Matter-type magic is actually quite rare, compared to other types." The older man explains. "Which makes this whole thing with you, Tubbo, and Techno all having that type of magic, but eh, the universe is weird sometimes. Might as well happen. But yours is different because it's more of a... magical kind of gift."

"What?"

"Techno can heal, which is very magical, but it involves using his, um. I don't really know the exact details to it, but it's a very physical magic, I guess?" Phil shrugs. "And Tubbo is strong and durable. Both their abilities are limited in range. Does that make a little more sense?"

Ranboo thinks about it for a minute. If his *teleportation* is his matter gift, it does seem different from what he knows about those gifts. He doesn't know much, but comparing strength, healing, and teleportation with each other, and one of them stands out a little more.

"What about the other type I have? Uh... mind. That's what it's called, right?"

Phil nods. He's always patient with him about the memory stuff. "Yeah, but I think the teleportation involves a lil' more than anything to do with your mind. And I'd know."

"Oh?"

"Yeah, I--" Phil stops.

There's a brief moment of pause.

"I never told you about my magic, did I?"

Ranboo shakes his head, and tries to stifle laughter at the sight of Phil's face going red.

"No, hey-- stop laughing, stop that. I can't believe this hasn't even come up yet. How hasn't it?"

Ranboo shrugs. "I mean, I never asked--"

"You could've--"

"I thought it'd be rude!"

"Not to me, at least. I literally adopted you, I should've told you this a while ago. Or at least showed you." Phil is laughing, too, so Ranboo doesn't feel too bad. "Alright, alright... What should I show you first?"

Hm? Ranboo cocks his head. *First? Does that mean--*

Phil stands up, brushing dirt off his pants. They are sitting in the brief spot of field between the orchard and the house, where the grass is a little sparse due to magic-related training. The ice and wind hitting it whenever Tommy and Wilbur go at it probably hurts the earth more than it should.

"Well, I guess I could start with the *big* one."

Ranboo stands, too, brushing off his own pants before taking a few steps back. He watches as Phil stretches out his arms, as if he's about to hold a sword, or something, and then the magic happens.

It's a little slow, at first, but little twinkles of light Ranboo sees out of the corner of his eyes begin to grow more. Little sparks of light fly around, and begin to spin rapidly around Phil's hands, and they converge and melt together and *grow*, and there's a sword made out of the little twinkles forming. It's the same size of the wooden one that Techno throws to Ranboo to train with (which, he has, in off-moments, and he's able to block much better now), but it isn't made out of wood.

"It's pretty fuckin' cool, isn't it?" Phil holds the light sword and swings it a bit with his hands. "Tommy has wind, Wilbur has ice... I have light."

Light. It feels warmer out all of a sudden, whether that's because the temperature actually went up or because of magic, Ranboo can't tell. It's fascinating to watch Phil melt the *light sword* into the little twinkles again, before stretching it out to make a bow. He forms an arrow, too, and shoots it straight into the house.

It disappears before it hits the house.

"Close your mouth, Ranboo, or you'll swallow a fly." He didn't even notice that his mouth was agape, but he closes it slowly.

"That was-- what-- *what* -- that was so cool." Ranboo speaks before he even realizes it. Cool. Interesting. Wow, he *loves* magic.

There's no forgetting that.

"And that's not all I can do." Phil gives him a wink. "You're not the only one with two gifts in this town, you know."

Oh. *Oh.* Ranboo makes sure his mouth stays shut as the light dissipates and he feels the temperature drop a little bit-- *okay it was magic, that's so cool, Phil is so powerful, what in the world*-- and he nods.

Phil takes a step towards him, and says nothing. Ranboo wonders why, and then he feels... Something. He can't describe it very well, but it feels like the warm apple cider that the nuns made for him once when he was younger, the feeling of running down the stairs on Christmas morning to see, even if it was small, presents decorating the cloth underneath the tree, the smiling faces of his friends, his family--

Oh.

"Is this you...?"

Phil nods. When they meet eyes, for a second-- and as he always does, Ranboo flicks his eyes to the eyebrows to avoid direct eye contact because that always makes him uncomfortable-- he notices Phil's eyes are glowing a faint color. Somewhere between shades of white and shades of yellow, almost like looking at the sun.

"You see, I know what mind magic is like, because it's what I got. *Mind and Light.* " Phil explains. The feelings fade. The warm feeling in Ranboo's chest doesn't. He taps his forehead. "Part of my magic is being able to influence the emotions of others-- and a lil' bit of empathy too. Don't tend to use this magic often unless I need to make a point."

Ah. Ranboo nods. He hopes he doesn't need to feel the other end of Phil's magic. Or maybe he already has, has forgotten about it, or wasn't even aware of it.

"But the light?" He gives Ranboo an even *bigger* smile. Somehow. There's a lot of pride in the smile. "I've spent years figuring out how to get it to work, but I've been able to use it to create things that are quite helpful. The pendants that everyone carry-- and I'm working on your own-- and Techno's weapons, all have my light in them."

He remembers the way the world went white when Tommy used the pendant to get away from the first dreamon. He remembers being told to look away, when Techno used that light on that dreamon again, in Sister Agnes' office. It makes sense, but he's never connected it before.

"So you can say I know a little bit about mind magic, and I know this teleportation isn't it." Phil pauses. "Or maybe it is. We still don't know your other gift, so I could just be speaking shit right now and not even know."

Ranboo nods. "Yeah, uh. That'd be unfortunate. To be wrong about it...."

Another pause.

"There isn't a bet going on about my gifts now, is there?"

Phil puts his hands up in the air in an *i'm innocent*, kind of way. "Not that I know of." But there's a bit of a... Well, Ranboo sure doesn't have any empathy, but he can read body language pretty okay sometimes and he thinks Phil might be lying, but he doesn't want to accuse him without any proof, so he lets it slide.

For now.

"Anyway, enough about me." Phil says, plopping back down on the ground. Ranboo follows, but slower, crossing his legs as he sits. "We're supposed to be figuring out *your* gift, after all."

"Oh, right."

"Have you been able to control it a little better?"

Ranboo thinks of how he almost teleported out of the shower this morning. He shakes his head.

Better to be honest than to lie, he reasons. He doesn't especially want anything like *that* to happen, but he felt the colors around him begin to shift and managed to teleport right outside the shower, still in the bathroom.

"Have you figured out how it happens, at least?" Phil picks up a stray leaf from the ground and twirls it in his hand.

"Um. Kind of?" Ranboo glances down at his hands. "I can usually tell when it's *about* to happen, and it's like, the last place I think of before I go, um. *Vwoop*. That's where I end up. But I can't figure out why it happens."

"That's progress." Phil says. He glances around. "Teleport to the porch."

"What?"

"You heard me. Teleport to the porch."

“I-- you’re not like Techno, the whole *learning on the job* thing, are you?”

“Hey, learned it from somewhere.” Whether it was Phil learning from Techno, or the other way around, was left ambiguous. “The moments before when you’ve teleported, what were you thinking? How were you feeling?”

“I’ll be honest, I don’t really remember much.”

“Nothing?”

“Um.” Ranboo thinks, for a second. He can’t pick up on any universal feeling. The dreamon was, well, that was pure adrenaline, wasn’t it? He saw the shadow and knew he had to get out, and so his body *did*. Not in the way anyone clearly expected. No one expected teleportation.

But after that? In the moments afterwards?

... Or, wait.

“Two of the times I was in danger.” Ranboo says.

“How so?” It was a bit of an alarmed response, because, well. He didn’t tell anyone about the second time, when he got back home and slammed himself onto the table, how that happened.

He feels his face flush. “I climbed a tree to try and find out where I was and the branch broke. And then, next thing I know, I hit the kitchen table.”

“So it seems to be more based on a flight-or-fight response, right now.” Phil scratches his chin. He sighs. He looks at Ranboo. “... I might have an idea.”

“*Never trust Phil’s ideas*” is now going to be written in large, bold letters in his journal. Circled, a few times. In a different color, if Ranboo is feeling a little experimental.

Of course, if he manages to forget *this incident*, Ranboo would love to know how.

He ducks under a low-hanging branch.

“Oh, Ranboo~”

It’s not danger. It’s not any *real* danger. He knows that Tommy and Tubbo and Wilbur would never hurt him. Techno, maybe, but he hopes not. Phil is just enjoying watching the whole thing happen. Apparently it’s similar to a game that the missing guy and his friends played when they were younger and training their own abilities, in the very same orchard and woods behind Phil’s house.

Manhunt. Not exactly how it was once played, because they’re not literally hunting him down in the woods, it’s more of a modified game of tag. Where instead of one tagger, it was

all taggers against one person, but even if he got tagged his position as *victim*, as Ranboo would call it in his head, wouldn't change.

It's not real danger.

But hearing Tommy laugh maniacally over the treeline makes him really *question* that in his head.

"Boo!" Tommy throws himself down through the trees. Ranboo jumps, and he--

...

Nothing.

"Really? Nothing?"

"You-- you did scare me, a little bit. I-if that helps."

They've been at it all morning. He's teleported twice, but the first one was from a sneeze (embarrassing), and the second one was from the little-bit-more-successful Wilbur freezing the ground under him and him almost sliding into a tree, and teleporting on the other side of it before he hit it.

So, there was a little progress, but nothing has really united his abilities more than being put in danger.

Even if it's fake danger.

"Fuck!" Tommy screams. He kicks a pinecone, and a gust of wind picks it up and hurls it through the sky. That pinecone is probably going to go to space. Poor pinecone.

"That's, like, the *seventh* time I've tried to get ya! I'm going to be doing the dishes for *two weeks* at this rate!"

"Did you seriously make bets on this 'game'?"

"Look, Wilbur is a very convincing son of a bitch, lemme tell ya." Tommy pinches the bridge of his nose. Another gust comes through the trees, before he throws himself back up into the air. "I'll get you next time!"

"Sure you will."

(He won't.)

As he watches Tommy fly back the direction Ranboo is hoping home is (he's a little turned around, still in the orchard, but man, is this a lot of trees), there's a moment of pause and silence and he can catch his breath. Tubbo is most definitely hot on his trail, but he's loud, and Ranboo can hear him coming from miles away. He may be strong and durable, but he doesn't have a lot of speed or stealth, unfortunately.

It's Techno that Ranboo is worried about. Wilbur is a little more obvious with his attacks-- ice, long-distance, and Ranboo can notice the air around him drop a little bit and know he needs to get out of there, especially after last time-- but Techno?

He hasn't seen Techno since his minute head-start into the orchard. The wooden sword he's carrying is barely enough of a defense, but at least he could block pretty well, if anything comes to it. No one else has weapons like Techno, and he was even limited to just the other wooden training sword. Limited, but not to any equal footing with Ranboo.

Equal footing in that situation is Techno straight-up lying on the ground. And even then, Ranboo is sure the pink-haired man could easily knock him down.

He glances around as he picks up his pace. The round ends when he teleports. And apparently bets are on the game now, which gives at least two players more of an incentive to get Ranboo to teleport.

Nope, sorry Phil, I am never going to trust you with ideas like this ever again, I love you, but-

He stops with his own thoughts.

Oh, well, that is new.

... He's a little too busy to focus on *that*, so he picks his pace back up again.

He hears a branch break behind him, and when he turns around, there's nothing. He grips the sword harder, and turns back the direction he was heading.

A blur of pink catches his attention out of the corner of his eyes. Instincts go wild, but not the right ones. Instead of the world flashing around him, Ranboo brings up the sword and *blocks an attack from Techno*.

That is enough to catch him off-guard, and they're both frozen for a moment, in an awkward beat.

"This is not going how I thought it would go."

"Me either."

Techno lowers his sword. "I thought that'd get you to, y'know."

"Vwoop."

"Yes." He juggles the sword to his other hand, swings it a bit. "I mean, I'm impressed you blocked that, too."

"I am, too." Ranboo says. "Impressed that I did that, over, y'know, vwoop. "

"Yup."

There's the sound of a bird chirping in the air. It's a nice day out. A little chilly. Ranboo fixes the zipper on his jacket.

"Well, I'll. Uh. Let you be."

"Thanks."

"Will probably start hunting you again in a few. Just gotta, um."

"Yeah, no, no. I get it." He watches Techno turn around and start walking in the other direction.

They're both not entirely too sure what just happened, he can tell.

In the end of this little game, the only time Ranboo manages to teleport is the time that Wilbur got him, so it isn't very effective on that front. But now Tommy has to do the dishes for the next two weeks in the house and Techno is probably going to teach him some more cool sword tricks, so, well.

As Tommy would say, *pog*.

It takes all his energy to not immediately pass out the moment his body meets the bed. The day had been long, from a science test in the morning that Ranboo is certain he isn't going to get a good grade on (he's hoping for a C, at least, because that's passing, and he's trying to catch up on so much science he's missed out on from years of being at the orphanage), to the little training game they had in the afternoon. Tommy and Wilbur got home from school early that day, something about it being called a *half-day* or whatever, and Tubbo was never too far behind, especially when pizza was promised for dinner that night.

It was just. A lot. And he sinks into the mattress and allows himself to slowly breathe. Inhale, exhale.

They hadn't gotten any closer to figuring out why he teleports. His eyes open again and stare at the ceiling, the only thing lighting the room being his bedside lamp. He's a few pages into a new book, *American Gods*, and it's very interesting so far, but he's too tired to read.

He doesn't want to immediately sleep. Ranboo never wants to sleep immediately. Sleepwalking was always a problem, and while he was safe, physically and mentally, in this house, and whenever he's gotten caught outside his room he's been pushed back in or helped to lay down elsewhere, he still hates it. There's no more echo of a key in a lock, but he still hates it.

Hates that it's another thing in his life that he can't control.

His first time teleporting was a bit hazy in his head. The only reason it stuck out so much was because of the dreamon, and that it wasn't too long ago, and *magic*, and--

Wait.

Ranboo sits up, slowly.

His gift is teleportation. Or, one of his gifts, at least.

The incident with the dreamon wasn't the first time it happened.

He remembers.

The orphanage. That one night. When he woke up, mid-sleepwalk, and found himself in the kitchen when the bedroom door was locked. He remembers it.

He's.

He's teleported before.

He stands up. He's teleported *before*. In his *sleep*. Was it the first time? The only time? Or was it just another example?

Is that how he managed to get outside when he sleepwalked, those few times? The doors should've been locked. Maybe they *were* locked, something the sisters *kept* from him, and he just teleported past them and didn't know because he was sleeping.

Then, does that mean...?

He glances at the clock by his bed. It's late. Not too late, but late. 11:33 PM. The house is still awake and alert, even though hopefully Tommy's dozed off to bed for school tomorrow.

They plan on going Halloween shopping after school tomorrow. Ranboo's never celebrated Halloween.

But his mind focus back on his thoughts. *No, no, wait, back up brain*, he thinks gently, as he slowly sits back down on his bed.

Has he used his other gift before and not noticed it?

Chapter End Notes

slams down books IT IS *DONE*, PHIL'S MAGIC HAS FINALLY BEEN REVEALED. BOTH OF IT.

Cookies to those who guessed his mind ability, I don't know if anyone connected the light thing yet but cookies to everyone really, for sticking it out this far. 22 chapters in and you didn't even know the ~magical powers~ one of the main characters had. Sure, Phil isn't the POV character, but he's always been central to the plot, he counts in my heart as a main character.

So, just a quick lil' recap;
Ranboo-- teleportation and ??? (matter & mind)

Tubbo -- strength and durability (matter)

Tommy-- wind manipulation (and maybe a second one but the child refuses to sit still)
(air)

Wilbur-- Ice manipulation (water)

Techno - Healing (matter)

Phil -- Emotional manipulation and light manipulation (mind & light)

Is Phil OP? First of all yes, he's Philza Fucking Minecraft. Second of all, I think it's more of a matter of where his weaknesses exist as a character. Sure, he can manipulate emotions-- although not explicitly mentioned ever are his own magical weaknesses other than empathy, what he does to others he will feel himself but he's too cool to be affected much by that-- and his light manipulation is super strong and what is used to purify the dreamons. But also, he's been around for a while (ha old man) so he's had a lot of time to hone his magic. In the end he's just super cool but his own character weaknesses-- he doesn't want to take advantage of people emotionally unless he has to and his light abilities are more akin to Wilbur's where he has to *make* stuff with it ie weapons and not more broad like Tommy's which is just *air*... Dunno why I just dumped all that but I don't know if it'll come up naturally in the plot so yeah take that.

So, really, Ranboo just needs to figure out how to use his magical abilities and this family could really take over the world /j
No, they have bigger problems to deal with.

LIKE I DO RIGHT NOW WITH FINALS HAHAHA I SHOULD REALLY BE GETTING READY BECAUSE IT'S ALL PROJECTS AND ESSAYS AND I WANT TO CRIE it's fine, I'm fine, I can do this, I'm fine. Phew. Okay. Mid-life panic over, let's get back to the meat of the chapter.

It's a long'un. I think it rivals the other chapter where Phil takes Ranboo shopping and stuff. 15, I think? I don't know this story is kinda a blur together at the moment. But this one is a fun 3.8k words, almost 4k words, wow, fun. I didn't want to split this chapter up because I am determined to stick with 30 chapters and if you end up getting a longer chapter in the future, you know why. I like the number 30. It's nice. Even. And divisible by 15, which is also always fun. Idk, even numbers that are divisible by odd numbers are fun.

ANYWAY, where was I?

Oh, yes, the chapter

The manhunt was a bit I 100% did not have planned or written out, fun fact. The only notes for this chapter are "START RANBOO TRAINING ARC POG", and that's what I had to go off with. Phil's magic was originally supposed to be revealed last chapter but I couldn't fit it in so it moved to this chapter, my plans are very subject to change sans the 30 chapter limit I'm imposing on myself because I like the number 30. But I've said this multiple times before, when I'm writing I get possessed by a muse who does all the work for me, I am just a simple servant who does the click clack of typing words onto a computer screen that you are now reading. Okay, self-awareness aside....

I like this chapter a lot. But next chapter? I think I'll like that one a lot.....
more..... :)

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It Was Fine, Now It's Less Fine :)

Chapter Summary

CW:

- there's some angst. you aren't free yet :)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

When Tommy and Tubbo learned that Ranboo had never celebrated Halloween, he had never been loaded into a car and driven to a store faster.

He knew what the holiday was; he knew it was the night before All Saints' Day, and he knew that the nuns would never let him participate in such a thing because of... Well, there's some sort of satanism aspect, a little bit of witchcraft, and they didn't trust the kids outside the orphanage if they couldn't see them (which meant being within ten feet of the building), so for Ranboo, the holiday never happened.

He had thought, while he was still in the orphanage, that he'd celebrate it one day. That when he aged out, when he was an adult, hopefully with friends, they'd invite him to a Halloween party, or something. Something like that.

But Ranboo was out earlier than he ever expected, and his friends were on a mission.

"We've got to do a group costume!" Tubbo says loudly.

They're standing in the middle of a costume store. It was one of those pop up, once-a-year stores that sell Halloween and *only* Halloween stuff that appears in closed-down buildings that once were a large store. Decorations and costumes line the shelves and hang up on cork boards, and Ranboo can't smell anything but plastic.

Tommy sticks out his tongue and blows a raspberry. "That's a kid's thing to do."

"I think we're still--" Ranboo gets cut off. Like usual. But it's not the bad kind of cut off; whenever Tommy or Tubbo interject, he never feels like he has to shy away. It's just something that happens.

"But *Tommy*, it's Ranboo's *first* Halloween." Tubbo grabs him by the arm (gently, Ranboo notices, whenever Tubbo grabs him it's always gentle and that's nice because Tubbo has quite the strength in him magically) and pulls him close in a side-hug. Which is a little awkward because of their height difference, but it's fine. "We need to do something together. As a *family*."

Even though Tubbo isn't a part of the family legally, he *basically* is.

"...Fine. If you can find something that's *cool*, then, I guess I don't mind." Tommy says, crossing his arms. Tubbo nods fervorously, before bolting off to a corner of the store. Once he's out of sight, Tommy groans. "I hate it when he uses them big eyes on me."

Ranboo chuckles. "You let him."

"It's *impossible* to resist." Tommy runs his hands through his hair. They begin to walk in the direction Tubbo went off in, towards the more classic Halloween costumes. The Axe-Murderer, the Vampire, the Salt-and-Pepper shakers-- those costumes. "I don't know how you do it."

"There were a lot of younger kids at the orphanage." Ranboo says. He doesn't even think about it-- the words just roll off his tongue naturally. At Tommy's quirked eyebrow, he realizes that, well. He doesn't talk much about the orphanage with everyone, does he? "You, uh, you learn how to ignore it when you're the oldest there."

It still worked on him, sometimes, Ranboo remembers. Not much. But sometimes. It got better when he got older and learned to resist it easier.

"Was it bad there?"

"What?" The question came out of nowhere. Ranboo shakes his head, though he does feel a little-- hesitation? *Guilt?*-- as he does so. "No, it was fine. I mean, except for the dreamon stuff near the end there, but it was fine."

Was it? A taunting thought says, but he pushes it aside. It's stuff that, Ranboo would be only honest with himself, he would rather *not* think about. Because thinking about it meant remembering, and he knows--

He knows the worst memories he has are the ones that stick.

His mouth feels a little sour, and there's a bit of coldness in his chest again, and he's trying to not think about it, but in trying not to think about it, he thinks about it.

"I couldn't imagine being in that orphanage." Tommy states, in the Tommy fashion like he usually does. He walks with his arms behind his head, stretching them out. Everything was nonchalant about him.

It's enough to pull Ranboo out of whatever spiral he was about to go through. Which was incredibly nice, because he'd prefer to not do one of those in a public store, on top of everything else.

"No school, no friends, no outside world. I'd be fuckin' sad."

"Yeah." Ranboo says, although quieter. They pass a few more costumes, with brightly colored cartoons on them. Or Anime? He was still learning. "I mean, we-- we still went outside. And I'd been given permission to go out to the park and stuff during the summer if my lessons were done, and I never would've met you guys if they didn't let me."

“Hey! Guys!” Tubbo runs up to them the moment he hears them approach. Whatever conversation he’s having with Tommy is immediately dropped. Tubbo is holding three hoodies-- a blue one, a green one, and a red one. They’re all obnoxiously large, and have large letters written on the front. “We could be Alvin and the Chipmunks!”

“We are not going to be Alvin and the Chipmunks.” Tommy says, before Ranboo can even ask who they are.

“No, no, hear me out! Tommy can be Alvin, I can be Theodore, and Ranboo can be Simon! All we gotta do is get Ranboo glasses--”

“Tubbo, *no--*”

“Wait! If we can get Techno and Wilbur in on it, we could do, like, the gang from Scooby Doo or something!”

“Do you really think they’d dress up?” Tommy laughs. “Oh, shit, what if we make Techno be Scooby?”

“Nah, I think he’s more of a Daphne.”

They’re saying words, and Ranboo is trying to comprehend them. But he’s terribly behind on a lot of media, so he’s just standing there awkwardly, listening to his friends banter about Halloween costumes. He doesn’t have a choice in what happens on Halloween; both of them seem pretty determined to take Ranboo trick-or-treating at least once, and of course, they *have* to dress up for it.

But all these characters aren’t making sense to Ranboo.

“Or maybe we could do something Marvel related? Like, Captain America, Iron Man, and like Thor or something? Ranboo could be a pretty cool Thor...”

Yeah, he doesn’t understand what is happening.

“I don’t think this is accurate to the book--”

“No, but it’s accurate to the movie! Or, one of them, I think.”

“Hey, shut up, get over here!”

The sleeves on Ranboo’s shirt are a little too short, but he ducks out of the small changing room and follows Tommy’s voice. The blond is fully decked out in his own costume, with a black cape that hits past his knees, a white button-up shirt, and cheap looking black slacks.

Tubbo is right next to him, wearing a flannel shirt with a bunch of fake fur attached.

He glances at his reflection in the mirror. He’s not going to put the mask on-- it smells awful, of fake plastic, and he doesn’t know if anyone else has put it on before him-- but the necklace

with the choker with the two bolts on its sides and the decaying suit is on, at least. The sleeves and pants are a little too short in length, but they *fit*, at least.

Frankenstein, Dracula, the Wolf Man.

“Oh, man, we look fuckin’ great!” Tommy says, pulling out his phone. “Ey, Ranboo, can you lean down a bit?”

“Oh, sure.” He does as he’s told, and they all smile (Ranboo a bit too awkwardly) into the mirror and Tommy snaps a photo.

“A couple of classic boys, eh?”

“Classic!” Tubbo repeats, beaming with joy. “Oh my god, this is perfect!”

And I know these characters, too, Ranboo remarks to himself, glancing in the mirror. The Frankenstein outfit is not accurate to the book that he’s borrowing from Techno. It’s not the gorgeous but inhuman looking monster-- instead it’s rougher, the mask with green skin and a rather cartoonish face-- and the bolts in the neck? Ranboo doesn’t remember that.

But if it’s based off the movie? Where is Ranboo to judge it?

Well, he will judge it in his head, at least. If this is what the movie shows it as, it’s incredibly inaccurate.

Tommy wraps one arm in his cape and holds it up to his face. “I vant to suck your blood!” He says in a horrible accent. Tubbo laughs, and Ranboo chuckles under his breath. “How was that?”

“*Amazing*,” Ranboo says. He hopes his voice is dripping with sarcasm. It, unfortunately, goes over Tommy’s head.

“Thank you, Ranboo. I am quite the man of talent, am I not?”

“You’re so full of yourself.” Tubbo states, not holding any of his punches back. He pulls at the fur around his collar, scratching underneath. “Anyway, these are perfect! Halloween can’t come any *sooner*, now, huh?”

“It’s still, like, two weeks away, Tubbo.” Ranboo says. He remembers dates, at least.

“Yeah, but it’s going to be the best Halloween ever!” The shorter boy replies. “Especially cause it’ll be your first!” He grins.

Ranboo smiles back. Tommy scoffs, somewhere, before mumbling about them having to go pay for the costumes so they can hop on the bus on the way back.

Sleep has been getting better for Ranboo. He finds he’s been sleepwalking less since he’s been adopted.

It still happens. He still wakes up in awkward positions, occasionally on the couch downstairs, but it's less frequent than it had been before.

Phil had asked him about seeing a doctor for sleepwalking. It isn't easy to get an appointment-- ironic, Ranboo finds, that sleep doctors are so busy with their patients, but they manage to get one for him set up in November, so it's mostly just a waiting game.

But if his sleepwalking had been mostly from stress, Ranboo thinks, he's been feeling a lot less of it lately. Without Sisters and nuns breathing down his back, he feels a little more relaxed. He's less restrained than he was before; he doesn't really need to ask for permission do go outside or leave or anything.

All Phil appreciates is a heads-up of where he's going and when Ranboo ought to be back. Ranboo hasn't left the house much on his own, but he does find it relaxing to wander through the orchard during his lunch break and find a quiet place to enjoy a sandwich when the weather is nice.

The point is, sleep is getting better for Ranboo. He never dreams, which is normal for him. Tommy thinks it's weird, but the conversation usually changes to whatever weird dream Tubbo has had if the conversation comes up around the two of them. But no one judges him past that; they just accept him, as it is.

It's... it's magical. Not literally magical, but he remembers how hard Sister Anne fought to get him treatment for his sleepwalking, and now her pleas fell on deaf ears, usually.

He curls up on his bed and shuts his eyes. The room is warm, the house is warm, the blankets are soft and they smell like fresh laundry (he did just do his sheets earlier that day before Tommy and Tubbo dragged him off to go shopping), and he feels safe, as he slips off into a dreamless slumber.

Except.

There's a pair of hands reaching out to grab him--

-- there's someone standing above him--

-- :) --

-- reaching out reaching out--

The colors are changing and shifting around him like an iridescent oil spill--

-- "No, don't wake--

--up!"

Woke

His eyes snap open instead of fluttering open like they usually do. Buzzing stops coursing through his body. He's cold and he's kinda wet and he sits up almost immediately, ignoring the pain in his head as he does.

He's on the ground.

Outside.

Ranboo glances around, immediately feeling adrenaline course through his body to help wake him up. It's cold. There's an autumn chill in the air. The sun is barely rising over the horizon.

There's no phone around him, and he doesn't know where he is.

Crap.

His memory is blurry, too, but not in the way it usually is. His memories get foggy sometimes, but living in a less stressful situation has helped that a little bit. Not having to worry about *fire burning burning no stop thinking about it don't remember*-- not having to worry about someone finding his journal helps. Not having to worry about anyone reading it (*destroying it flame ashes fire burning*) helps so much.

Ranboo wraps his arms around himself. He's cold.

The trees are all but bare in the area he's in, and he notices the quiet nature around him. Everything feels muted, the sounds that he would usually expect to be deafening in a forest in the early morning not present at all. The dirt digs into his socks, and he pulls at the sleeves of the t-shirt he fell asleep in the night before. Damp dew has soaked his entire left side, and he shivers as a wind passes through the empty branches.

Well. It confirms his theory that he *can* teleport in his sleep-- he only thought it would be sleepwalking, like the time at the orphanage, but if he teleports just *sleeping*, well, that's more of a problem to deal with?

He doesn't understand the magic that he has. It isn't buzzing, like it usually is. He feels cold and empty.

Ranboo, with his arms wrapped around him tightly, rubs his thumb gently across the golden cross around his neck. He hasn't taken it off in a few weeks, the comforting presence is enough to help him calm down, but he doesn't know if it'll help much in this situation.

Ranboo is out in the woods. Alone. He doesn't know where he is.

(He's cold.)

Snap.

He feels a shiver go down his spine. Ranboo turns his head quickly, glancing around the dawn woods he woke up in. The trees are empty and bare, autumn claiming its bounty early as leaves cover the forest floor in a variety of orange, red, and brown hues. There's hardly any leaves left on the trees, and if they are, they are brown, hanging on by a thread, and falling a few at a time.

The woods are empty.

But he knows they're not.

Snap.

It's behind him again. Something is out there.

Something is.

Is hunting him.

Now that he looks closer at the trees around him, he notices that some of them are broken. Not broken from decay, but broken from what looks like some kind of force. They're snapped like bones, and the edges are covered in something black.

His heart drops-- if it can drop any *lower* than it already has. He feels his vision begin to spin, because where he is--

-- there's dreamons.

Run.

It's not a voice, but it's something telling him to run. And despite the pain of sticks and stones and pinecones and whatever else falls on the forest floor hurting his feet, he picks a direction and *runs*.

There's an easier way out, Ranboo knows. He just needs to do it. He just needs to teleport. He's in enough danger, isn't he?

He can hear the snapping of branches and twigs behind him and he doesn't look back. He doesn't want to acknowledge what is chasing him. He just needs to *go* .

Come on, come on... He's trying to focus on teleporting. He's running for his life, isn't he? He's in danger, even if Ranboo refuses to turn his head and look back at it. There's a stump that he jumps over, and he feels it hit his leg and something digs in *deep* , through the fabric and across his shin, but he doesn't stop. He stumbles but doesn't stop. He can't stop.

Not until he feels the shifting of the colors around him.

Which.

He doesn't. He doesn't feel the colors change or the vertigo or any of that.

So he keeps running. His heart is pounding and his legs ache and burn and his chest aches and burns but he can't stop because something is *chasing* him.

He thinks about home. Ranboo thinks about home, trying to trigger something-- anything-- into working. He thinks about the warmth of his bed. He thinks about the low strumming of Wilbur's guitar that he falls asleep to. He thinks of the old radio in the kitchen and Phil humming along to the music while he makes breakfast, or dinner, or something in the kitchen that smells *warm*. He thinks of the silent, turning pages of Techno reading a book in the living room, fixing the reading glasses that snap easily with whatever tape he has nearby. He thinks of Tommy's loud, boisterous laughter at the sound of a bad joke, a game beaten, something silly and dumb being said.

He thinks of home. He thinks of his family.

And instead of just waiting, he pushes. Ranboo *pushes*, with all his might, to think of these things. He pushes and he takes heaving breaths and he thinks about all that his memory can hold at once, even if he's making some stuff up, and he prays, *God, please, God, please*.

God, please.

He trips over a fallen branch that is bigger than himself, and his ankle gets caught and something snaps, and he stumbles over himself and, if things aren't bad enough, he starts to roll down a small hill.

He can see the shadowy figure of a dreamon behind him.

Please, please, please--

He catches himself on a tree before he rolls more, and he scrambles to his feet. The ankle shoots pain up Ranboo's back, and he cries out.

I want to go home.

It snarls.

It pounces.

And finally, the colors begin to shift around him. The black fur of the dreamon turns iridescent, then purple, then black again, and Ranboo's head spins but he *pushes* through it and imagines his bed at home.

He hits the floor of his room with a *thud*. Pain shoots up his ankle again. Something definitely broke, or twisted, or sprained, but he's still heaving for air.

He can hear the echo of panicked footsteps in the house. There's a knock on the door. "You okay, Ranboo?"

It's Phil. He recognizes the strange accent-- he wonders why it sounds somewhat British, but he never comments on it-- and he nearly cries at the sound of it. Because if that's Phil, then he's home, he's safe.

"Ranboo?" Maybe Ranboo is crying, because Phil makes some sort of indescribable, distressed noise and opens the door anyway. "Ranboo, are you al-- what the fuck?!"

Chapter End Notes

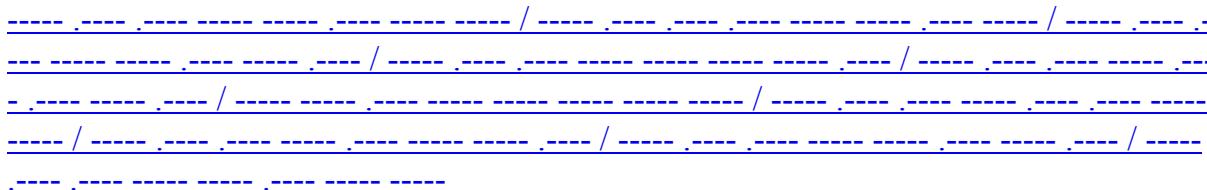
Mr. Ranboo Beloved, your stream today (the dreaded 23rd stream). The live overlays. The acting. That was amazing. It got me writing again, it got me to fix up the end of this chapter that I've been struggling with since the last update.

So thank you :)

ANYWAY. I bet I got y'all with the fluff at the start. We're not free yet. We have seven chapters left, and we're not even to the climax yet, so hold onto your horses. And your friends. And anything you can, because there are things that people may have lied about that are about to come undone. Truths are gonna be revealed. Ranboo's (hopefully) going to stop teleporting on accident.

Okay I lied about that he'll probably teleport on accident every now and then still haha--

But be ready.



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Oh, Yeah. It's All Coming Together

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“I think it was because I had a really weird dream.” Ranboo says, wincing as Techno poked at his ankle not-so-carefully. “I don’t, um, remember much of it.”

“Surprising,” the sarcasm in Techno’s voice speaks miles, but Phil only nods in intrigue-- and a little bit of horror.

Tommy and Wilbur were off to school, and Phil hadn’t hesitated to tell Ranboo’s online teacher that he wouldn’t be sitting in for any lectures today because he wasn’t feeling well. And in all truth, he really wasn’t feeling well.

His head wouldn’t stop spinning, and he kept randomly teleporting around the house. Once or twice, sure, he had teleported from a sneeze and from Tubbo jumping out from behind the couch and scaring him, but this was on a different level. It was hard to do much other than sit or lay down, and once Techno had returned from a morning job of hunting down a lone dreamon, he had immediately gotten to work on healing up Ranboo’s injuries from--

Well, whatever happened to him. The weird sleep-teleportation.

“This is definitely concerning.” Phil says, scratching at his chin. He’s leaning back against the wall in the living room. He hasn’t left Ranboo’s side since he found him, half-conscious and panicking with a broken and swollen ankle a few hours before.

“I do, um. Remember one thing about my dream.” Ranboo says. He pushes his hair out of his face nervously. It’s gotten a little longer, probably the longest that he’s ever had it, and it’s getting a little annoying to deal with. But it’s fun to have it longer, to have something to mess around with when he’s in a lecture for online class with his webcam off, when all he has to do is listen.

“Hm?”

“It was, like. It felt like someone was reaching out to me, and...” The memory is slipping through his fingers like sand again. Maybe he should invest in a dream journal, like Tubbo has-- because something is telling him this might be more than just a weird dream. “...They told me to not wake up, I think. And-- and they had a really weird face.”

At the sound of that, Techno glances up. Ranboo’s ankle is glowing the same light pink of the older man’s magic, and he’s just wrapping it up now so it heals properly. Ranboo already feels a little fatigued from it, but he’s terrified to fall asleep again. At least the other injury he got from his eventful morning-- the scratch that took up all of his shin-- was only wrapped up. It wasn’t too deep to cause any harm, but it might scar.

“What do you mean, weird face?”

“It was-- it was like, um. Just this really creepy smile.”

At that, Phil’s eyes widened. “Was he wearing any green, by any chance?”

Ranboo shakes his head. “No, I-- I don’t remember.” He doesn’t remember much, other than the smile. It was a little unsettling, deep in his bones. Not to mention, he was distracted by the feeling of something pulling on him, too. And then waking up in the middle of nowhere.

Not fun.

Techno stands back and brushes his hands off. His ankle is wrapped and healing now, and Ranboo can feel the pain already start to ease a bit. Which was nice-- but he didn’t want to abuse the healing gift that Techno has like Tommy did, once upon a time, and be doomed to not be healed unless it’s life-threatening.

He awkwardly shifts it up onto the couch and elevates it back up, like he had before. It feels a little better.

“That would be *really* weird if it was, unless it’s your other gift...” Phil mumbles, but it’s loud enough for Ranboo, and Techno, to hear.

Techno glances between the two of them, and looks.

Well. That’s interesting.

He’s never seen the man look nervous before. Ranboo cannot tell the details of faces, but he can see the way that he shifts awkwardly, bites on his lip. Glances away.

“Techno.” Phil, too, notices it immediately. “Do you have anything to say?”

“Um. No?” He pushes his glasses up on his nose a bit more. He doesn’t make direct eye contact with Phil.

“Techno.”

A beat.

“Technoblade.”

“It’s not my secret to tell.” Techno sighs. He rubs his temples. “I don’t really know most of it, either. But, since his life might be in danger, well, whatever.” Phil rolls his eyes. “Dream told me-- this must’ve been, like, four years ago or something, I don’t know-- that his magic isn’t, uh. What it seems.”

Ranboo glances between the two adults. He’s just a witness to the conversation, but it’s still fascinating to eavesdrop on.

Well, he wasn’t eavesdropping on it. They were having it literally in front of him. But he reclines back and tries to ease the massive headache he has right now and keep steady breaths to not trigger teleportation again. At least, not until his ankle feels better.

"He never explained further than that." Techno continues. "I think I ended up beating him in a sparring match or something, but he never elaborated on it."

Ranboo felt his eyes fluttering. He tried to resist it. He was-- he was terrified. He didn't want to teleport again in his sleep.

Phil walks over to Ranboo, and nods to Techno as he does. The next thing Ranboo knows is that Phil is rubbing his head gently, messing with his hair in soothing motions. It's too relaxing. "Thanks, Techno. You'll have to mention that to everyone else at the meeting tonight."

"Heh? Why *me*?"

"Because I'm not leaving one of my kids alone when their magic is going crazy."

One of my kids echoes in Ranboo's brain. He... He is, technically, legally, Phil's son. But it's weird to hear. He doesn't think he'll ever get used to it.

"You can rest your eyes for a little bit, Ranboo. I'll be here."

And Ranboo nods, feeling safe enough to allow his eyes to close.

Reaching, reaching--

-- "*I can do this, I can do this,*" an unfamiliar voice says--

"Please don't wake up this time..."

"You're my last hope."

"Please, please, please..."

Ranboo isn't better the next day. His head isn't spinning that much, and his ankle is better and he can walk again, but it's hard to get through a few coherent thoughts without feeling dizzy, or without accidentally teleporting.

He pushed himself. He can tell he pushed himself with his magic. Or something else is happening, he doesn't know, but it is not *fun*. Phil has to tell his teacher again that Ranboo won't make it for the lectures again, and perhaps the next day.

"Just the flu," Phil lies through his teeth on the phone.

It isn't the flu.

He has a fever, too. Apparently.

Ranboo can't remember the last time he was *actually* sick, like this. It might be magic, it might also be catching something out in the woods in the cold. Even though, he knows you

can't catch a cold from being out in the cold, that it's a myth the Sisters told them as young kids to keep them bundled up safely when they were to venture outside during cold winter days.

He stays on the couch. It's quieter downstairs. Ranboo can still hear Tommy being loud and existing downstairs, but it's much better than it would be if he was in his own room, with the shared wall. At least during most of the day, Tommy would be at school.

Still, he doesn't remember the last time he was *sick* sick, or if he ever was. That might be buried deep in one of his old journals, but he--

-- he doesn't want to think much about anything right now, because the worst part of all of this weird sickness is the dreams.

He doesn't *dream*. He's hardly ever had a dream, or at least, ones that he can remember. Ranboo always chalks it up to his sleepwalking, but that's come to a sudden stop with whatever is happening to him.

But he's dreaming.

A loudly clicking tock. Sister Agnes holds a green composition book. There's fire. Ranboo feels like he's on fire, burning up, becoming ash, just like that old journal.

He's standing outside the orphanage on the porch. He's four-fourteen-sixteen-twenty-two. It's pouring.

He's in a castle. Why is he in a castle?

Someone is singing a song. It's an unfamiliar tune, about a country he doesn't know. It sounds nice.

"Please don't wake up."

Phil thinks it's some sort of magic overload. Pretty rare, he explains, but given the circumstances of Ranboo's world-- being introduced to magic so late, having an abnormal amount of encounters with dreamons in a short amount of time, and being in danger at least-- what, four times now-- because of it, he says, it's Ranboo's body reacting to all the stress.

He doesn't like it, whatever *it* is.

When Phil has to leave during that afternoon to attend a meeting with the others who are searching for Dream, Techno doesn't go with him this time. Instead, Techno takes a seat in the big chair in the living room with a book.

Ranboo glances over. "What are you reading?"

Ranboo is *incredibly* bored. Reading and watching TV makes his headache worse, so he's just been slipping in and out of naps to pass the time. Even at the risk of the bad dreams, he

can't do much but lay down and hope that this magic *overload* will pass. His journal is abandoned to the side of the couch that his legs are awkwardly curled up on, but this isn't like the first night where he woke up awkwardly squeezed onto the couch. He's got an actual pillow from his own room and blankets he could get cozy under if he wanted, but he's too warm from the fever to want to do that.

"It's a collection of poems," Techno says. He keeps his voice a little lower than he normally does. It helps with Ranboo's headache. "Do you need more water?"

Ranboo glances down to the water bottle by his journal. It's easier to keep everything on the floor than it is to put them on one of the side tables, because he doesn't need to sit up to reach them. Instead he can just stretch out his arm and twist it a bit to find his journal or his water.

He shakes his head. "I'm-- I'm good. I think."

Yeah. He has water. He still needs to sit up a bit to sip it, but he doesn't want to sit up right now. He shifts and curls his back to the back of the couch, so he's facing outward.

"Do you have a favorite poem?" Techno asks, after a few moments of awkward silence.

Ranboo shrugs. "I, um. Do psalms count?"

Techno shrugs. "Do they?"

Ranboo doesn't know. "I like Psalm 23."

"Which one is that?"

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Ranboo repeats it. He's just as surprised as anyone else would be that he actually remembers something, but he remembers dog-earing the page in his old bible and going back to it before he went to sleep as a kid. He would recite it for his nighttime prayer under his breath, because the night time prayer the nuns taught him was always boring. "He maketh me to lie down... um. Something about green pastures, and. Uh. I don't remember the rest."

Of course. But it does make Techno chuckle, softly. Ranboo barely hears it.

"Do you have a favorite poem, Techno?" Ranboo asks. He shifts his arms under his pillow to be a bit more comfortable.

"It's hard to pick, but... I suppose I have one that I like more than the others." He says. "*Do not stand at my grave and weep*, by Mary Elizabeth Frye."

"... I've never heard that one."

"I think I remember it." Techno clears his throat. "Do not stand at my grave and weep, I am not there, I do not sleep...."

"Please... don't wake up this time."

Ranboo still feels incredibly warm, but the voice was the clearest that it has ever been. The weird voice he keeps hearing, in and out of sleep-- one that doesn't sound like any of his family, but it sounds clearer than any other voices in his dreams-- is clear.

His eyes are still shut, but he can hear the voice clearly. He rolls his head to the side. Is he asleep? Is he awake?

“Wait. C-Can you hear me?”

Ranboo nods. He feels his eyes flutter open slowly.

The living room is colored in twilight. Beautiful autumnal sunset hues. The house is quiet, but he can hear, faintly, the sounds of Phil making dinner. Techno isn't in the chair anymore, and the lights are turned off.

Surprisingly, Ranboo's head has stopped hurting.

He glances around.

There's a stranger in the living room. He wears green. He has a weird mask on. Ranboo squints at the man, slowly sitting up as he does so. He's not *normal*, Ranboo can see. He wears modern clothing but has a sword across his hip, but that's normal for Ranboo's world now. But he is... transparent. Ranboo can see the wall through him, and there's a magical glimmer to his body. There's a strange wrapping around his waist like a rope, but it isn't attached to anything.

The rope is broken on one end, and barely hangs off the ground. It's a light purple color, unlike the rest of the man, but it's glowing. Not brightly, but it's glowing, pulsing with the rhythm of a heartbeat.

“You're-- oh my god, it finally worked.” The man lets out a deep breath, before he starts to laugh. It's a weird laugh-- not hysterical. Nothing felt funny. But it was a laugh of relief. “I thought-- I thought that it was hopeless, but the veil was so thin around you, I had to try.”

Ranboo cocks his head in confusion, and kicks his legs over the side of the couch. Moving didn't feel that bad anymore. If anything, he felt pretty great.

“Wh-- what?” Ranboo speaks. His voice cracks, it's scratchy, it feels like he's talking through a radio. “Who are you? ... Wait.”

The mask. Green.

“Are... Are you Dream?”

“Y-yeah.” The man-- Dream-- nods. He moves the mask to the side, revealing a face of... Well, a normal human. He has a few freckles and glowing green eyes, and shaggy hair. He's not that outstanding. He looks, surprisingly, like a normal dude. “Ranboo, right? Phil's new kid?”

“Um.” He feels his cheeks burn a bit. “Y-Yeah.” *I guess.*

“Cool.” Dream lets out another deep sigh. “Oh, yeah. Uh, don’t freak out.”

“Freak...out...?” Ranboo glances down at his own hands, which are.

Transparent, too.

In fact, his whole body is transparent. And his *body* -- a different, solid body-- is sound asleep on the couch.

“Uh.”

“No, no, I got this fucking far and I am not losing you.” Dream moves at an almost inhuman pace, and grabs Ranboo by the shoulders, pulling him up and away from *his body*. “Ranboo, look at me, don’t look at, uh. You.”

Ranboo, slightly terrified of what is happening, nods, and looks at Dream’s hairline. It’s a normal hairline, but it’s like looking the man in the eyes. It’s something to focus on that is not his body right now. Or, his, uh. Other body.

“What did you do to me?” Ranboo asks. He feels himself shaking, but the hands around his shoulder are solid. It’s grounding. Slightly.

“I, um.” He notices Dream glance back at the sleeping body on the couch, and then meets Ranboo in the eyes again. Ranboo keeps looking at his hairline. “Okay, look, most of this is my fault and I’m sorry I accidentally made you sick.”

“W-What?!”

“But I have been stuck in the REM for who knows *how long* and you’re able to access it too, apparently, so I may have pushed your limits a bit.” Dream doesn’t take a breath when he speaks. Actually, now that Ranboo notices, the man isn’t breathing at all.

And REM? Limits? Ranboo is incredibly confused.

“Aren’t you kidnapped, or something? How are you here?”

“Techno was right.”

“Huh?”

Dream glances away. “I haven’t been the most... truthful about my gifts. To everyone. Mostly because, well, it’s easier to say that I can manipulate reality and make shit than it is to explain all of this.” He waves his arms, motioning to the space they were in.

Which, Ranboo is starting to think it’s not quite *reality*.

“O-okay then, but. Um. Can you explain it to me, then?” Ranboo laughs, nervously. He doesn’t know what to do in this situation. It’s very uncomfortable for him. He doesn’t like it.

“Yeah, I can. I did kinda put you through hell to get here.” Dream glances up, looking towards the kitchen. The sounds are muffled, but he can still hear Phil making dinner. Or whatever he’s doing in the kitchen.

Dream isn’t sure why he lies about his magical gift. Gifts. He isn’t sure how many he has, but he doesn’t want to do the little test Niki has because he likes the truth to be, well.

A secret. Not even George or Sapnap know, and while it eats him up inside every day, to know he’s hiding something like that from his closest, best friends, it’s a habit.

No one in his family had magic. He wasn’t even sure of what it was until they moved to this small town, and he encountered a pink-haired man fighting a monster. His feet moved before he could think and he joined the fight. With no skills, no knowledge of anything, but he knows that he still has a large sword from the last dream he was in, a comically large anime sword, and the pink-haired man could carry it and use it well enough to kill the monster.

The dreamon. Magical energy given the will to live, by, well, no one knows. Maybe Techno would. He’s pretty old, but Dream isn’t in the Techno Age Club so he doesn’t know how old, but Techno knows a lot.

Dream doesn’t hesitate in lying when he’s asked about his magic.

“How long have you had it?”

“My whole life.”

“What is it?”

“Reality manipulation, or something?”

“What does that mean?”

“I can make stuff. I’ve got like, an inventory of a bunch of stuff.” He pulls out the large anime sword he got back from Techno. He doesn’t know why Techno would give it back to him. He is barely ten at the time. He has a few other fun things. A weird tea hat from one dream. A potato that is supposed to cure all disease, but it’s raw. An old, rotting shield he kept because he liked the design.

“That’s powerful,” Phil said. “None of your family have magic?”

Nope. He’s from a family of duds, just like Tubbo is. Of course Tubbo wasn’t in their life at the time. Tommy was only four. Tubbo’s family hadn’t moved to the town yet.

It’s a lie he kept up, when he met George and Sapnap, who were a little older and a little younger than him, but were training to use their own magic. Fire magic, accuracy magic. It was not a surprise that they came because Dream had cool magic, but they stayed because they were friends. Brothers. They made a perfect team to hunt down dreamons, and as they got older, that’s what they did. They even found a rundown, three-bedroom apartment to stay in the town in.

George coded projects on the side to pay for the bills, Sapnap decided to go to college for a bit longer. Dream isn't sure what he wants to do outside hunting, but he takes up odd jobs around town. Helps find missing pets. Mows lawns. Helps Niki with shipments at the grocery store. Tastes new coffee flavors at Karl's cafe. Those kind of odd jobs, they don't pay much, but George is able to afford mostly everything with just a few coding projects every month.

Which is very lucky, Dream knows. He wants to contribute more, but he doesn't know what else he can do.

The whole lie is a little ironic and on the nose, Dream finds, when he asks everyone to just call him Dream. His magic is dreams. He is Dream.

Ironic.

But he doesn't think about it too much. Whenever he sleeps, he goes into different worlds. He can travel through the REM. He called it the REM because he found it cool, a second world where his soul? Essence? Consciousness? Whatever it is, it's where he goes between dreams. A separate layer of reality, a separate realm in between sleep and awake. It was his, and his own, and as long as he kept himself tethered to his body, he would return when he woke up.

Of course, he wasn't expected to be kidnapped by a dreamon the other day.

But life is full of surprises.

He keeps himself conscious as the dreamon drags him away from his friends. He's fighting, of course, but the darkness has a grip on him that is hard to fight. Not corrupting, but the dreamon had quite the jaw strength, and while it didn't feel like anything punctured, it was tight, it hurt, and he couldn't get out.

He's heard of the King of Dreamons before. Dreamons who speak-- sometimes, to mess with people, other times because they're strong and have things to say more intelligent than incomprehensible growls and screeches-- mention the King. It's talked about in magical literature, the strongest dreamon of all. The King.

It wants him.

It wants him alive.

Because Dream knows what his magic is like. All magic creates and uses energy-- Sapnap creates fire from his energy. George uses his magical energy to be incredibly accurate with his weapons. Phil uses his energy to make light, to read and understand emotions, to push them to others. Tommy uses his energy for wind. Wilbur uses his energy to make ice.

It's a cycle. Magic is energy. Constantly being made, but limited by the human body.

Except Dream's was a little different. He isn't quite sure what his gift falls under. Matter? He takes things from dreams, technically creates them. Mind? He travels through the REM to

enter dreams, usually just his friends, or his neighbors, because he doesn't like to stray too far from his sleeping body.

He's creating energy when he sleeps.

He's a generator. As long as he's asleep, he'll be constantly creating energy. Incredibly overpowered, but Dream can't control his body when he is sleeping. It's a massive Achilles heel. His greatest weakness is where his magic comes from.

And, of course, dreamons feed off magical energy.

If anything, Dream isn't too surprised when the King says it hunted him down because of this. Because secrets can't always stay secrets. Lies are not forever. Truth is.

So when he's knocked out by dreamons and not fed, but absorbed-- kept alive, but not awake-- by the King, he makes a risky decision. The tether that keeps him connected to his body breaks, and he runs as fast as he can to find someone.

Anyone.

It takes a while, but he eventually ends up at Phil's house. Sapnap and George are safe and healing, and maybe-- maybe Phil's mind magic could sense Dream. Maybe.

(Not.)

But there was a new kid. Dream had heard about it through the grapevine, Phil adopting a new kid. He's tall, he's awkward, he slouches and is incredibly new to the world of magic.

But.

The veil of the REM is thin around him.

Maybe, just maybe...

Ranboo can be Dream's way out.

"And that's what happened." Dream finishes.

They were interrupted by Phil gently shaking Ranboo awake for dinner, to which Ranboo learned that his body was still achey, sick, feverish, and not a fun place to be in, but when he fell back asleep shortly after a delicious stew, Dream was waiting for him.

"I'm not going to remember all of that." Or any of that. It answered Ranboo's questions, thankfully, but he was already confusing himself up with things. Tripping over his thoughts. It felt like Dream handed him a cord and somehow Ranboo got tied up in it without thinking about it.

"That's fine. That's all stuff I can explain when everyone rescues me." Dream gives him a big smile, but Ranboo can tell it's a bit more forced and fake than it should be. "And this is

where you come in.”

“Huh?”

“I can’t get out of the REM, but *you* can.” Dream pokes him roughly with his index finger.
“You can tell Phil how to find me and then I can get rescued quicker.”

“I... Oh, yeah.” He isn’t getting directly involved. *Thank you, God.* Ranboo has had enough of dreamons. He knows it’s a part of his life now, but he doesn’t want to learn how to hunt them like Tommy and Tubbo do. He’s more pacifistic, like Wilbur. He only wants to protect himself and his family, he doesn’t want to *actively* go looking for trouble.

But.

He’s passing a message along. He can tell Phil where to look. He can help them that way, from the sidelines, and then be done with it. He can stay out of it.

That’s good. Ranboo can do that.

“Oh, one last thing, too.” Dream scratches the back of his neck. He looks even more nervous than he was when Ranboo first woke up? Or, well, whatever this second magic of Ranboo’s is, however he is connected, whatever. “Don’t tell Phil I’m the one who pushed your magic. There’s a lot of things in this world to fear, and Phil’s wrath is on the top of it. I will not hear the end of it if he figures out I’m the one who made you sick like this.”

Ranboo nods. He wonders what Phil’s wrath is like, too. But he hopes to never be on the receiving end of it, if it’s making *Dream* stressed like this.

Chapter End Notes

[Do Not Stand At My Grave and Weep](#) is probably one of my top ten poems, btw, I couldn’t resist throwing it in here. I feel like PL!Techno would like the poem a lot :)

Anyway, hi y’all. Bet you weren’t expecting an update this quickly. Or of this length, but let me tell you something.

folds hands together. Turns around. Flops down on bed. Screams into pillow
THIS. PLOT POINT. HAS TAKEN ME. SO MANY TRIES. TO INCLUDE.

Okay, okay. From the beginning, I never wanted c!Dream to be the Bad Guy in PL. It didn’t fit with my idea to have a Human Villain. And yeah, at the time, I thought Dream SMP c!Dream was a pretty complex villain whose story hadn’t been told and maybe it would be cool to think that he’s not in control of himself at all or possessed by some sort of Big Bad but then like. The prison stuff happened. And uh.

If you want Villain Dream check out Ordinary(ish) People when Promised Land is done
hahaha---

But this whole thing. Of Dream's magical gift literally just being DREAMS. I've been thinking about it for months. Probably when I released the first few chapters and realized I had something going here, I went, "haha, wouldn't it be funny if Dream had dream magic" and my brain was like "WRITE THAT DOWN!!! WRITE THAT DOWN!!!! CANON!!!!!!" and I always had Ranboo have a similar sort of magic to the way Dream's works (explain it more in the future) so that connection? Gold. SOLID gold

Originally this was supposed to happen in, like, Chapter 12 BEFORE the adoption. And then I tried it after the bits with Sapnap and George but it didn't fit there, either. And then I tried it in chapter 20. And chapter 23. And here we are, attempt number 69,420 of writing this stupid plot point out, I finally get SOMETHING to work. So I hope you enjoyed it,ahaha. It's one of my favorite points in this story and I can Officially Say.

Oh, honey, you got a BIG STORM coming.

Aside from Dream-related plot, Ranboo's sick days wrote their own. A lot of this story is writing its own but it's going pretty according to plan so far (if anything I keep pushing plot points back in my outline but God Help Me Promised Land Is Gonna Be 30 Chapters Or Else), with what I have planned out (aka bullet points like "phil magic reveal pog" and "techno does cool anime stuntz" because I am both a child and someone who plans absolutely nothing on paper but everything in their head). So we're on track still, at least.

In relation to Ranboo's magic, I'll explain it a bit more in the future :)

Oh man. It feels good to have all this stuff written out. It feels good to finally have most things revealed. No more cryptic, ominous messages, right, Cosmo?

....Right?

:)

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Edit 5/18

Hi if you've gotten this far do not worry! I am not abandoning this story! I'm just working on the last six chapters and finishing the story before I update it again <3 Thank you always for your support, it means so much :D

Life Moves On

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Ranboo,” Phil says, slowly, looking at him deeply. He can’t tell Phil’s exact expression-- Ranboo still feels a little warm from his fever and it’s also two in the morning, so the combination probably isn’t helping him much.

But it was either tell Phil immediately when Dream was done and fight through the general feeling of sickness that fogged his brain a bit and the warmth from his fever, or risk waiting until morning when he’s a little better rested-- but also, could have forgotten some things.

“I-- I know, it’s a lot to believe.” Ranboo feels his mouth go dry, and he glances away, tugging his hand nervously through his hair. “But--”

“No, I believe you, mate.” Phil says, leaning back in the kitchen chair. He’s got a few maps spread out on the table that Ranboo has never seen before, but they’re all labeled with interesting names of places out in the forest behind the city. The forest behind the city that is technically part of some strange state park-conservation-hybrid thing, Ranboo doesn’t really know, but it’s where the dreamons mostly come from.

Apparently.

“It’s-- oh, you believe me?”

Phil nods, his blond hair falling in his face. “Seems just about right that the guy who asks everyone to call him Dream has dream-related magic. Should’ve seen it coming, honestly.” He laughs, but it’s a bit bitter. “And where did you say he was?”

“Um. He said...” He takes a moment to focus on his thoughts. He has to remember-- no, he will remember, and for once, his memory doesn’t fail him. Ranboo glances down at the maps in front of him, and points out a section of wood that is labeled, in handwriting, that he would consider worse than Tommy’s, school ruins. “Here.”

Phil glances to where Ranboo points, and lets out a sharp gasp. More of a mixture between a tsk and a hiss, with a bit of a whistle, really, and it wasn’t a sound full of anything pleasant. “Of fuckin’ course, it’s in the middle of dreamon-infested land.”

Where else would the dreamons keep their King, except in the most protected space they can?

“Sorry,” Ranboo says. Force of habit.

“It’s not your fault.” Phil replies, instantly. “You should get back to bed, Ranboo, you’re still not feeling well.”

For a second, Ranboo wonders how Phil notices-- he thinks he's doing a good job of trying to keep his eyes open and his head upright-- but he remembers that Phil has that empathy gift and can probably tell by reading his mind or however it works that Ranboo just wants to sleep for another twelve hours. Or, maybe, he isn't doing as good of a job as he thinks he is.

It's the latter.

"M fine,"

"No you're not." Phil rolls his eyes, and this time, his laugh is a bit warmer. He helps Ranboo to his feet. "Let's get you to your actual bed tonight, yeah?"

"Sure." Ranboo's left a book by the couch downstairs-- a book of poems that Techno gave to him during his "babysitting" duty earlier that day-- but he can get that in the morning, he thinks, as Phil wraps his arm around Ranboo's and awkwardly tugs him up the stairs and to his room.

His room. His family.

The bed is cold when he hits the sheets, but it's a good feeling against his hot skin. Phil didn't even turn on a light to help Ranboo up the stairs, instead-- well, Ranboo can't tell quite clearly, since the adrenaline of spilling everything to Phil that he got from Dream is starting to wear off, but he could swear that Phil was glowing, ever-so-slightly, to illuminate the hall to guide them so they wouldn't trip over anything.

When the door shuts, Ranboo expects to hear the clicking of a lock. But he was no longer at the orphanage, stifled under rules and expectations. Instead he was home.

His home.

Even though he still feels a bit feverish, he curls into his bedsheets anyway, and promptly passes out.

It's a few days later and Ranboo is around more people than he usually is; the only exception he can think of is Sunday mornings, but even then, nothing *this big*.

Phil's invited a lot of people over. Mostly adults, because they were going to be discussing the plan on how to rescue Dream. With Ranboo's new information, they were put weeks ahead of schedule (if they even had one) and he couldn't deny the swell of pride in his chest.

Even if he didn't do any of the work, he remembered enough to pass on.

Yet, still-- there are a lot of adults. Adults with faces he can't see, new voices in the house that make everyone in it at ease except for him.

He can hear them in the kitchen from his spot in the living room that he's curled up with-- the poetry book that Techno lent him a few days prior, halfway through it-- with Wilbur, Tubbo, and Tommy relaxed around.

“You motherfucker!” Tommy screeches. There’s a small bit of laughter from the kitchen-- but no comment. Ranboo glances up to see Wilbur overtake Tommy in the game of Mario Kart.

“Blue shell superiority!” Wilbur retaliates. “You just got Mario-Karted!”

Ranboo is pretty sure that isn’t a word. Or one he’s ever heard before. Still, he watches with curiosity, of what’ll happen next. There’s a strong draft in the room suddenly, one he is sure is Tommy’s magic.

Ranboo glances to Tubbo, who remains quiet, steadfast, and focused on the game. Probably off in his own head. He’s in third place; Wilbur climbed quickly to first and Tommy dropped to fifth, but Ranboo knows that it won’t be too long before something else happens.

“How come I can’t blue shell anyone?!”

“You were in first, Tomathy,” Wilbur says, craning his neck to look over Tommy, who is leaning into his line of sight. “No one in first place gets the blue shell.”

“I still--”

They’re in the third lap now. Ranboo glances from the TV, to his family, and back to the TV again. He sees Tubbo smirk out of the corner of his eye.

The boy uses a mushroom to jump across a patch of grass quickly and overtakes Wilbur, just moments before he crosses the finish line, and claims first place.

“Fuck yeah, Tubbo!” Tommy cheers, immediately, as he gets third place. Wilbur gets second, and is sitting back in shock, staring mute at the screen.

Tubbo looks at Wilbur, and gives him a middle finger. “Checkmate.”

“You suck.”

Ranboo doesn’t understand but also understands completely at the same time. He doesn’t, at first, understand why Tommy would be cheering Tubbo on, even if he didn’t get first place, but he sees it as a win over his brother, and Ranboo can’t help but join in quietly in the glee of witnessing it take place between his--

Well. They *are* technically his brothers. Will they ever *feel* like his brothers? No one at the orphanage ever felt like family to Ranboo. This home-- this messy, chaotic home-- feels like family. But brothers?

Eh, in the end, Ranboo thinks, *it’s just a word*. Whether he calls them his brothers or not, they’re still his family. And that’s what matters more.

“You wanna join, ‘Boo?” Tubbo asks, glancing up. “Tommy should have more controllers to join.”

Ranboo shrugs, placing the bookmark-- which is just a piece of notebook page, cut smaller to fit better-- back into the book. “I’ve never played before.” He admits.

At that, Tommy smirks. “Ohoho, my dear brother from another ‘motha, allow us to introduce you to the world of Mario Kart.”

“You’re just doing this so you can beat me and gloat, aren’t you?” He might be blind to faces but Tommy is too easy to read.

Tommy’s face lights up red. “What-- no!”

“He totally is,” Wilbur quips in, calmed down from the banter of Mario Kart. He doesn’t flinch when Tommy goes for him, or even looks up from his phone. It doesn’t take much to restrain Tommy-- just a hand keeps the younger boy at bay, even though they’re both tall people. Ranboo is just a little bit taller, but even then, he’s astounded to see the two bicker like little kids.

“Enough, boys--” Phil’s voice says, as he pokes his head into the room. He’s not mad-- Ranboo wonders what anger would look like on Phil, and after the encounter with Dream, who was more afraid of that than the situation he was in, Ranboo would like to never see-- just slightly irritated. And tired. There are deep bags under his eyes. “If you want to keep playing Mario Kart, either keep it down or take it upstairs, alright?”

“Sorry, Phil,” everyone says at once. Even Ranboo mumbles it out, and nothing was his fault.

“Thank you.” Phil sighs. “Also, we’re ordering pizzas for dinner, Tubbo, are you staying?”

“Probably!”

“Cool. Anyone want anything specific?”

“Pineapple!”

Phil looks disgusted at the thought, but nods. “Anything else?”

“Hot dogs.” Tubbo says, in the very Tubbo way that he can be sometimes. Completely deadpan, with a distant look in his eyes, as if he’s been possessed.

“...No.” Phil shakes his head. He glances around the room, but when no one else says anything, Phil nods. “Alright. Keep it down or move upstairs, alright?”

“Yes, Phil.” Everyone says, at once. Not in unison. Tommy says it loudly, Wilbur says it calmly, and Tubbo keeps his deadpan, possessed look in his face, still off in the distance.

There’s a moment when Phil ducks out of the room where everything goes quiet. And it’s peaceful-- Ranboo can enjoy moments like this during the week when the others are at school and he has a break in his studies. Having it now is odd, but he cherishes it, before Tubbo breaks it.

“Wonder what they’re planning.”

“Something to go rescue the homeless dude, I’m sure.”

“Dream is homeless?” Ranboo asks, glancing over to Tommy.

“Not *really*.” Tommy huffs. “It was a joke with him and Techno over some sparring thing, and it just spread after a while. I’ve been to his apartment. Small and empty.”

Wilbur rolls his eyes. “It’s a nice place, Tommy. You just don’t like the interior decoration... or lack of it.”

“It’s got no personality, man!” Tommy huffs again, crossing his arms.

“Do you think they’ll find him?” Tubbo interrupts.

“They *should*. Ranboo’s weird Dream dream helped him there.” Tommy picks up his controllers. “Another round, anyone?”

“I’m dipping out, you can have my controller if you want, Ranboo.” Wilbur says, setting the controllers to the side. They’re not the red and blue ones or the pro one that Tommy is playing with, instead, they’re both plain grey. But it’s a nice shade of grey.

“I guess I can.”

Tommy smirks.

Ranboo doesn’t know what he got himself into.

“I can’t believe you *won* that last race, man!” Tubbo laughs through a mouthful of pizza.

The three of them-- Tommy, Tubbo, Ranboo-- were relaxed on the back porch, leaning against the side of the house. The sun is setting and the pizza is warm and delivered, but the weather definitely would call for a sweater of sorts, if Tommy wasn’t around and keeping them in a circulated bubble of warmer air.

The blond grunts and digs into his pizza without a comment.

“I mean, the controls are easy once you get the hang of it.” Ranboo replies. He was shocked, too, that he managed to win that last race, but he’d been watching Tubbo between chapters of poetry, watching how the shorter boy played. Quietly, focusing intently, waiting for the right moment to strike with a shell or well-timed banana, or cutting across corners perfectly with a red mushroom to speed him up. “Plus, once you were in the front, you didn’t have any bombs to worry about.”

Their last race was a custom race-- one that Tommy wanted to do, to watch everyone suffer-- of bombs only. Or whatever the game called them, Ranboo couldn’t remember. Like he couldn’t remember half the names of the adults sitting around the kitchen table and living room chatting casually, as if they hadn’t just been planning a raid on a monster’s den.

God, what has my life become?

No answer. But that’s fine for Ranboo, now. Not hearing a direct answer anymore.

“...Do you think they’ll let us help?”

“Huh?” Tommy swallows a big bite of pizza. Doesn’t choke on it, surprisingly. “What do you mean, Tubbo?”

“With the Dream stuff. Do you think they’ll let us help look for Dream? Raid the dreamon’s den?”

“Probably not.” Tommy replies. “We’re ‘too young’ and ‘haven’t had enough training,’ he uses his pizza to mark the quotations in his speech, before taking a violent bite of it. “Plus, it’s on Halloween, and we don’t want to miss that, do we?”

Ah, right. Ranboo remembers their shopping trip from what he wrote down in his journal and the inaccurate costume that’s hanging in the back of his closet. They-- as in Tubbo and Tommy-- had plans to go trick-or-treating in Tubbo’s neighborhood, and because it would be the first time Ranboo celebrated Halloween, he was getting dragged along with.

Not that Ranboo minds, of course. He’s never experienced it before-- it was *too pagan and satanic*, according to the nuns-- so it would be fun to do something new. And he wasn’t expected to *say* or *interact* with strangers if he didn’t want to. *And* he got free candy out of it?

Sounded like a great deal to him.

The sun was setting warm ambers around them, and something suddenly hits Ranboo. A wave of emotion, a lot of emotion, all at once. Both happy emotions and sad emotions, and his eyes fill with tears before he can even reach up to wipe them away.

“And then-- holy shit, Ranboo, are you okay?” Tommy cuts off from whatever he was talking about, incessant chatter with him that Ranboo has learned to mostly tune out.

Ranboo nods, and tries to speak, but his voice comes out croaked. “Yeah, I’m-- I’m fine.”

“Do you need a hug?”

A beat.

Ranboo nods, and he feels his two friends-- his two *best friends* -- his *family*-- wrap their arms around him in a hug. It’s awkward because they’re squished together in the small bubble that Tommy is keeping around them of warmer air, and Tubbo is significantly smaller than the other two of them, but even if he has an elbow digging into his side, the hug outweighs everything.

“I-- I never thought I would have a family.” He admits. The other two (Tommy, especially, which is surprising) stay quiet, and keep holding on. “I always thought that-- that I would just grow out of the system, find a job somewhere, and be on my own forever. But-- but you both changed that, for me. I have a home now, I have a family now, I--”

I’m not alone.

He knows that he's never *really* alone-- he always has the Lord on his side-- but sometimes it feels crushing, to be alone, physically. Locked in his small bedroom at the orphanage at night, staring up at the popcorn ceiling just wishing he could be anywhere *but* there, hoping for a miracle but knowing nothing will ever happen. Curling into his sheets that were always a little too short for him, holding onto whatever was closest-- a pillow, the sheets bunched up, maybe a stuffed animal (and he'll admit it, he's mature enough)-- and trying to imagine what it would be like to *not* be alone.

Now he isn't anymore. And the emotions are just now crashing over him.

"Awww, 'Boo! Stop it, you're making me cry!" Tubbo whines, but holds onto him tighter.

"Well, I'm *not* crying, I'm man enough!" Tommy's voice cracks. He is definitely crying. No one comments on it. "Shut up, shut up, my voice didn't just fucking crack--"

They break into laughter. The kind that hurts your stomach and sides. But it's a good laughter, it's a good pain, because Ranboo is with a family he never thought he would have.

And he's happy.

Chapter End Notes

LET'S GET EMMOOOOTIONALLLLL

Hi everyone! Long time no see,ahaha. The long story short is, I'm working diligently on finishing Promised Land before I start posting it again, but I decided hey, let's give y'all a sweet surprise and give you Chapter 25 :D

I feel like this is a bit of a bridge chapter-- the last chapter before things start to get crazy. I know I keep saying that about chapters and it is kinda up and down, but looking at my outline for the next five chapters? Oh boy, hope y'all are ready >:D

Have a nice day/night, and enjoy the family fluff! :D

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Why Did You Trust Phil's Ideas AGAIN?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

He closes his eyes and focuses. The leaves on the trees decorate the ground now in autumnal hues; October is coming to an end (one might say it's almost Oct- over; oh, Tubbo, you creative genius), Ranboo knows Halloween is only around the corner because Tommy and Tubbo won't shut up about it, but he--

Ranboo pulls back his thoughts.

Focuses, just like Dream told him to do.

“Your magic is really... Weird, actually.”

Ranboo glances up from the TV. “How so?”

Dream was still hanging out in the house, a spectre who can't interact with anything during the day but can talk to Ranboo at night. But now that Phil knows there's a ghost haunting the halls (or, well, basically)-- things are left out. Techno is sitting in the living room reading, and the TV is on.

It's midnight news, so nothing too entertaining. But it's what Dream keeps asking for, so they leave the TV on at night to give Dream some entertainment. And Ranboo can talk to him.

So whenever Ranboo goes to sleep and feels a small tug on his soul, his consciousness-- he pushes through it and sees Dream again. The guy is pretty chill, after the panicked magic nonsense he pulled before.

“You said your magic was mind and matter, yeah?” Ranboo nods. “It's... Most of the time, when people have two opposite sorts of magic, it kind of... Contradicts, I guess.”

Some weird magic about dreams let Dream understand magic better, apparently. Or maybe just Ranboo's, because they were both connected to this space. Dream with his... dream magic, and Ranboo with--

Well he's not quite sure what this second magic is, but it's definitely interesting. Tommy looked it up on google and said astral projection, but it doesn't feel like astral projection. Or what Ranboo imagines it would be.

“If someone had earth magic and air magic, it would be... Not balanced, I guess. Like how you can't stick two magnets together if they're the same magnetic energy. But the other way around, technically--”

“You're starting to lose me.”

Dream laughs. It's like a tea kettle. Ranboo doesn't mind it.

"Well, okay. If Tommy had an earth gift, like, moving rocks or something, his air magic would be a lot weaker. If Phil had shadow magic, it would make his light magic weaker. The opposite types of magic conflict, usually one will be more powerful than the other."

"Okay, you're making a little more sense now."

Dream nods. "Sorry, I just-- it's like Minecraft speedruns. Learning about how magic works is just really cool, you know?"

Ranboo nods. He knows what it's like to enjoy learning something, being passionate about something. Wilbur has his music. Techno has his books and old stories, Tommy has-- well Minecraft, but other video games as well-- and Tubbo has an unfortunately worrying knowledge about building bombs.

Yeah, Ranboo doesn't want to know why Tubbo knows how to make pipe bombs, and he just is gonna pretend he forgot that information.

"No, no, it's fine. Go on."

"Right, so opposite magics usually push against each other, but your magic is... Perfectly balanced." Dream holds both his hands out and then clasps them together for a visual metaphor. "Almost like your magic is both mind and matter, at the same time. Which I've never heard of before."

At the same time?

At the same time.

There's something about that phrasing-- and Dream continues to talk about magic a little too quickly, how you can train yourself to notice the energy of people's magic, but everything seems to fade out as Ranboo thinks.

Really, really, thinks.

"It's both..."

"Huh?"

"My-- my magic." Ranboo stands up suddenly, from his relaxed position leaning against the couch on the floor, absentmindedly listening to Dream, who decided his favorite spot was sitting on the coffee table. "You just said it. My magic is both mind and matter, not just mind and matter."

"Well, yeah, I guess it is--"

"Whenever-- whenever I've teleported before, it was usually pushing myself physically, or it was, like, adrenaline and my mind going at the same time. And I haven't been able to figure out how to do it on command, but what if I have to do both?"

Dream looks at him in awe-- he has the dumb mask up on his face, but Ranboo doesn't mind, it takes the pressure of eye contact away-- but Ranboo can still tell Dream is looking at him in awe because of the older man's body language. "Go on." He says.

"And maybe-- maybe this isn't astral projection, like Tommy says it is. Maybe it's, like... I don't know. The mental part of teleportation? Teleporting my consciousness?"

"That could be it." Dream hums, kicking off the coffee table. Even though he was sitting on a few magazines, nothing shifted or changed. "... You don't know how to use your magic on command?"

Ranboo shakes his head.

Dream grins. Even under the mask, a bit of his chin dips down, and Ranboo can just feel the manic energy. "Well, I might be able to help you with that a bit."

Dream's help is... Well.

Telling him what to do. Which is what Phil and Wilbur and *everyone* have been doing since the day Ranboo crashed into the kitchen table. Telling him how magic feels. How it works.

But if his magic is different-- if it's two converged into one-- then how their magic works won't help. Tubbo has been the most useful with magic, because he can help Ranboo explain the buzz that happens right as Ranboo is about to teleport and the goosebumps on his skin after he does, but that's it. No amount of comparisons to *light* or *wind* or *ice* help Ranboo in any way.

But Dream's help might actually... be useful, for once.

Focus .

The sun is barely risen, but Ranboo knows where he is. Kind of. He knows which direction home is in, he doesn't know how far away he's actually *walked*. Phil was awake making coffee in the kitchen but Ranboo left out the front door and took a long route to avoid being noticed because he wants to know if he can actually *do this* on his own. With Dream's advice, of course.

Ranboo opens his eyes again, glancing around the trees. He shouldn't try and go too far, but maybe...

One of the roots of the tree across from him rises slightly above ground, twisting in the natural way that plants do; if he was running from something, he would trip over it.

But maybe he can teleport to the *other side* of it?

Focusing is never one of Ranboo's strong suits, especially during something serious, like Mass. His thoughts tend to wander and he loses track of his thoughts very easily, but ever since leaving the orphanage, it's gotten easier to manage.

Now, if only he could--

Ranboo stares at the root. Memorizes it to the best of his ability, and turns away from it.

"Whenever I have to enter someone's dreams, they have to be the first and only thing I imagine when I close my eyes."

Ranboo thinks of the root, and begins to walk away from it, slowly.

"And then it feels like a rope ties around my waist, and it tugs me through."

He thinks of the pull on his soul that he feels whenever he goes to sleep and ends up in the place Dream is in. The weird place between awake-and-sleep.

There's a little tug on his soul.

And Ranboo thinks of the buzz in his bones that he gets whenever he's teleported before. Mostly out of fear, when the dreamon was hunting him down. Well, there's multiple times that has happened, now that it comes to mind--

There he goes again, but he holds onto the tug on his soul and feels a pull on his body, like two ropes. Smaller than the tether around Dream's waist.

Ranboo feels the pull, and suddenly

it

S N A P S

vwoop.

The colors blur around him and he thinks about the other side of the tree root, what he can remember of it (because of course, the Lord likes a little bit of humor, and gives the kid with memory problems the magical gift to teleport, very funny, haha) and it feels like his feet leave the ground for a moment and then he nearly trips over the root of the tree.

He did it on command.

Ranboo glances around. There's a rock on the ground. He can feel the tug and the pull come a little easier to him now, now that he's figured it out, put two-and-two together, and...

Vwoop.

Ranboo leans down and picks up the rock. It's a nice rock. He puts it in his pocket.

"Ah, Ranboo, there you are." Phil says, glancing up from his newspaper and taking a sip of tea. It's not actually coffee, like Ranboo thought.

It's three hours later. Still morning, but no one else in the house is awake yet. Maybe Techno. He never seems to sleep, but Ranboo definitely saw him head up to his bedroom the other night, so maybe he was actually sleeping for once.

"I was curious as to *why* you left through the front door, but I wasn't going to ask."

"Oh, uh. Sorry."

"You don't have to ask to leave, but a little heads-up would be appreciated, mate." Phil glances at Ranboo. Notices something immediately, about Ranboo's mood. "What's up?"

His excitement must be spilling out of him like a fountain, Ranboo thinks, when he remembers the empathetic gift that Phil has. Ranboo can't help but grin, a little bit. "I figured it out."

Before Phil can ask, *figured what out*, before Phil could ask to clarify what he means, Ranboo thinks about the other end of the table. He feels the pull and *snap* and the *vwoop*, then he's at the other end of the table.

Phil drops the mug and it spills tea everywhere, but it doesn't break. It must've been made out of something pretty strong to not break. Ranboo wishes he could make out more details of Phil's face, because he's sure it's an entire mix of-- he's gobsmacked, he's shocked, he's in a shocked, gobsmacked awe, because Ranboo has been struggling for weeks to figure out his magic, how to do it on command, and he comes in and just *does* it on command.

He's a little dizzy, though, and he probably should stop teleporting too much before he gets too ahead of himself, and he leans forward and grabs the back of the chair to steady himself, but Phil pays no mind to it.

"You-- you-- how did you figure it out?"

"It was Dream, actually." Ranboo says. He feels his stomach growl a bit, and he can't tell if the little wave of nausea is from overdoing his magic or doing it on an empty stomach. "Ah, I'll explain in a sec."

First, some food sounded *really* nice.

Again, why Ranboo trusts Phil with ideas like this, he sure doesn't know.

He explained everything that he could to Phil, that he remembered-- the talk with Dream, the advice, putting it together that his magic is not two separate things but *one* gift of a weird, hybrid-type-- and Phil listened like his life depended on it. And of course, Phil needs to show it off immediately, because he's a proud fath--

Phil is a proud father of his son, Ranboo, and he wants to show it off immediately to his other siblings. Not in a favorite way, not in a bragging way, but in a *look! Look at how cool this is!* *He finally figured it out!*, and Ranboo knows that Tommy and Wilbur would feel the same

ecstatic joy from seeing Ranboo finally figure it out, since they've all been trying to help him figure it out since it first started, but.

Ranboo wishes he had the courage to glare at him and go,

Phil.

A game of manhunt, again? Really?!

Because, well, Ranboo managed to get a decent amount of rest where he wasn't feeling too dizzy from teleporting the short distances he had for a few hours that morning, but he wasn't sure being thrown into a game of manhunt was the best idea.

Well, magic works like a muscle, he supposes, when he ducks under a low (for him) branch during his ten-second head start. The wooden sword is a little lighter in his hands than it was before.

There's no Tubbo this time, to charge at him and knock him over with his strength, at least. The biggest threats would be Tommy, coming in from the sky and... Techno, and his sword skills. Which Ranboo was able to successfully block before, but he's a little less confident about everything, because it's a manhunt game and not one where he just has to be scared for someone to win.

This time, it's heavier. The first one to tag Ranboo wins.

What do they win? Wilbur and Tommy argued over who would be taking over chores, and Techno settled it by saying the winner doesn't have to do their own laundry until *Christmas*.

God, please, Ranboo thinks in a desperate prayer as he feels the wind pick up. It's gotten a little cooler now, but Ranboo doesn't think Wilbur would be much of a threat.

But, well, actually, now that Ranboo thinks about it, maybe he was a *little more* than last time since there's a bigger prize over his head. Wilbur could definitely throw himself into this fully in order to avoid doing his laundry until *December*.

God, please, give me the strength to do this. He wants to survive longer than five minutes, because, then, *he* wins. And if he wins, well. He hopes he gets in on that laundry waiver too, but also he probably would end up doing his own laundry by the next week because he'd feel bad, but still. Bragging rights would be a better medal of honor.

"*Oi, Ranboob !*" Tommy cackles from above. He drops down right in front of Ranboo, and his landing causes the leaves on the ground to fly up in a small cyclone. "*Wilbur is gonna be doing my laundry for two months* if I win this, so let's make it easy, okay?"

They still don't know *why* they were shaken awake for this, but any mention of training or competition definitely gets Tommy up on his feet on a day he should have off.

Tommy lunges.

Pull. Snap. *Vwoop*.

Ranboo teleports to the other side of him and breaks out into a run again, but he can't help but turn his head back to catch Tommy's frozen form, and watch the blond slowly turn his head in shock.

He's barely able to hear the "you *motherfucker*" leave Tommy's mouth before he pulls again. *Snap. Vwoop.* He's teleported further ahead, using his eyes to find a place and hoping for the best.

It's like pulling a bow, Ranboo imagines. Pulling the arrow back. Letting it fly. *Vwoop.*

He stumbles further ahead, and notices that the air drops *a lot* in temperature. He keeps his eyes on the ground, noticing the smallest bit of frost covering the leaves, and slows down. The last thing he needs to do is slip on ice and almost slide into a tree.

Again.

Ranboo glances around, keeping himself as alert as possible.

"You're getting smarter," Wilbur says, stepping out from behind a tree. Ranboo twirls to face him. "You know I don't usually like fighting one-on-one, but if I can get the little gremlin to wash my clothes *until Christmas*, I can die a happy man."

"That'd be a very short-lived life," Ranboo comments.

"You're getting a little sassier now, huh?" Wilbur stomps his foot, and ice spreads out with it. His eyes are glowing with blue energy, and the ice creeps to Ranboo's feet. "I like that."

Ranboo glances up. The tree behind Wilbur has strong branches, and one at a nice height. *Do you like this, though?*

Aim. Pull. *Snap*

Vwoop

It's an unsteady landing and Ranboo nearly falls off the branch, but he grabs onto the trunk of the tree and holds on tightly. A wave of dizziness hits him like a truck, but it's a very short-lived truck, and he glances down to see Wilbur frozen, in place.

Heh, *frozen*.

"Have an *ice* time, Wilbur!" Ranboo says from atop his perch. Wilbur turns quickly to see him and lunges again, but Ranboo thinks of the tree root from before and hopes that it's closeby, or he's going to really regret that move.

Luckily, the *vwoop* comes just before Wilbur can shoot any ice magic at him, and he's right where he started in the early hours of the morning.

Unfortunately, Techno is leaning against one of the trees.

Ranboo can't seem to catch a break, can he? He grabs the handle of the wooden sword that's sheathed at his waist as the pink-haired man approaches.

"So you figured it out, huh?"

He'd ask *what gave it away*, but Techno is smart. Techno probably had the whole thing figured out when Phil asked him to join the game, to up the ante. He can hear a distant yell of *one minute left* come from closer to the house.

There's also the whole thing that Ranboo just teleported in front of Techno, so.

He hears the rustling of leaves and frantic footsteps. Wilbur and Tommy are hot on his trail, and no doubt on his way.

Unfortunately, too, he might've pushed himself a little *too* much for one day, and Ranboo isn't quite enjoying the small headache that's slowly growing.

"It's not two gifts, it's one gift." Ranboo says, slowly pulling out his sword. "Just two types of magic."

"Haven't heard of that happening in a while."

"...How old are you, again?"

Techno smirks, and it looks like he's about to say it-- and maybe, at that moment, Ranboo would've been allowed in the *Techno Age Club*, if Tommy hadn't burst through and interrupted. Wilbur's frost quickly spread, too, and. Well.

Ranboo was surrounded.

A beat.

"Looks like we're at an impasse, then." Wilbur says coolly, folding his hands behind his back. Cold and calculating.

"The fuck's an impasse?" Tommy asks. The wind picks up with his voice, and Ranboo feels it through his hair and thin sweatshirt.

"It's a deadlock." Techno explains. Tommy glances at him. "It's when-- none of us are gonna move until we all move and try and go for him at once."

"Oh, yeah. I knew that." Tommy crosses his arms. "Well, we don't have that much time yet, so..."

Just like Techno had said, none of them were gonna move until they all moved at the same time. Tommy lunged first, and was the fastest, but Wilbur had a little more strength to his leap towards Ranboo. Techno lunged, too-- he didn't seem like the kind of person to want anything but bragging rights-- and had strength, speed, and stamina over everyone.

It should've been over right there.

But Ranboo used what little bit of magic he could muster up, and he thought of the comfort of home. He thought of those first days watching Tommy and Tubbo (and occasionally, Wilbur) spar in front of the orphanage.

It's definitely the furthest he's tried to do on command, but he pulls.

The world snaps around him.

Vwoop.

Chapter End Notes

HERE WE GO THIS IS ENDGAME FRIENDS

I've gotten everything written and finished. I feel like... I don't know WHAT to feel other than proud of myself? Excited? In awe? I'm just, wow. Okay. It's weird that everything is finished, it really is. But I'm excited to finish it, I'm excited to share it with y'all.

I just hope you enjoy it as much as I have. That being said, update schedule? Every day. Even though I have everything finished and I could technically spam-publish everything, I want each chapter to have their time to shine :)

... Anyway, onto the chapter.

I always knew Ranboo's magic was going to be a little hard to stitch together with the ideas I had. Astral projection and teleporting felt similar but also so very, very, VERY different, at the same time, and I like having connections with magic and stuff. Like, Phil is one of the other characters who have two types of magical gifts, and they're Light and Mind gifts. There's a bit of a connection there, but it's not opposites, like Ranboo's mind and Matter.

And then the whole Dream scene kinda wrote itself. It just poured out of me, and I ended up changing the whole plan for this chapter. Still getting it out in 30 chapters, but the final conflict is gonna be poured into 27-28-29 with chapter 30 being an epilogue. So the plan is still working out, probably for the best.

AND RANBOO'S MAGIC IS SO COOL. It's been through so much since I actually started to take this story a little more seriously. The whole idea of his opposite magic being one magical gift that presents itself in two ways? I love my brain. I love the duality.

I'm so smart and cool (/j I'm not actually that cool I'm literally writing block people fanfic)

The manhunt was especially fun to write, and I think it wraps up Ranboo's magic learning arc up quite nicely. Of course, he's still gonna have a few setbacks, and maybe he did figure it out a little faster, but I think that once he realized he was looking at it all wrong, it clicked and was a little easier to do. That being said, he's still gonna experience side effects if he overdoes it (and he does here, with dizziness, nausea, and a lil' headache, and after he gets out of the ending scene safely he definitely passes out for a few hours but shh) but at least I can finally write Ranboo using his magic and not knowing how to use it.

He'll need to know how to use his gift, after all... The endgame is near.

That's enough of me. I hope you guys have a wonderful day, and I hope you're ready for some early Halloween content in the next few chapters! Because Halloween may be a holiday for some people, but for others, it's a lifestyle.

Haha okay see you soon!

:)

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October 31st, the Spookiest Day Of The Year

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Most of Halloween day was, unfortunately, forecasted to be quite cloudy. A small spell of rain hit in the early afternoon while Ranboo took a break from his classes for lunch, but after it passed, the clouds started to fade bit by bit.

Not that it mattered much since, according to Tommy, the fun of Halloween happens *at night*, and it was one of those rare years that would see a new moon fall on Halloween night.

A full moon could have been more thematically appropriate, but Ranboo decides that it still fits. Halloween, darkness, the whole *vibe* fits for his first official Halloween.

It's also the day that Phil and the other adults-- who Ranboo has met, in brief passing, to get snacks during stretch breaks for online classes in the kitchen-- are going to go rescue Dream. He is still alive-- Ranboo had him visit the night before, and they have confirmation of that, and that he's still in the same place.

Which is good.

Which means Ranboo's job is done.

It's taken Phil a while to organize the adults and gather supplies. He doesn't know what for, but at the same time, Ranboo doesn't really *care* to know. He's done his part of being the messenger, he can let the adults take over and save Dream.

By the time All Saint's Day comes, Dream *will* be safely rescued. That's all that matters.

The sky officially clears around twilight, just in time as Wilbur parks his car in the driveway of Tubbo's house.

The eldest brother glances at the rearview mirror to look back at them. "You *will* behave, right, Tommy?"

Tommy is decked out in his entire look. Ranboo is not wearing the mask that goes with his outfit, and he and Techno fixed up a few details of it to make it a little more accurate to the book. Tommy protested it, but it makes Ranboo feel better about walking around looking like an undead Frankenstein's monster.

Frankenstein was, after all, the doctor. And the monster was-- well, it could be argued the doctor was the monster as well, could it not?

"I always behave!" Tommy immediately retorts. "Right, Ranboo?"

Ranboo just looks at Tommy.

“Okay, ouch. Your hesitation just killed me.” Tommy grumbles, going to unlock his car door.
“Nevermind, shut up.”

“I didn’t even say--”

“Shut up!”

Wilbur rolls his eyes. “I’ll be over at Niki’s. You remember the address?”

“It’s, like, four houses down from here.” Tommy replies with a wave of his hand, already out of the car. His candy bag is a pillowcase he most definitely ripped off someone else’s bed. But it’s not from Ranboo’s so he won’t complain.

Ranboo has a random tote bag that Phil gave him before the adults left. It’s a reusable shopping bag from the grocery store, decorated with beautiful line art of fruits and veggies. Not spooky, but a nice design.

“Remember the rules?”

“Don’t get lost,” Ranboo says.

“Don’t get into a fight with a little kid.” Tommy pauses. “Unless they steal your candy first. Then it’s fair game.”

“Try and keep Tommy from fighting little kids,” Ranboo adds.

“Good.” Wilbur nods, and rolls up his window. He gives a curt wave, and pulls out of the driveway.

Tubbo is out of his house in mere seconds, running towards his friends with incredible energy. He doesn’t try to be sneaky when he shouts “BOO!” at the two of them.

Not that it works.

But it’s in the spirit of things, at least.

“Are you ready for the best day of the year, big man?!” Tubbo asks-- he’s incredibly hyper as he does so, as if he’s already downed twelve bars of chocolate. With the small brown smear on his upper lip, Ranboo doesn’t doubt it.

“I think I’m ready? I’ve never done this before, though.”

“Yeah, cause your orphanage was full of--”

“Tommy.” Ranboo glances at Tommy and squints. Trying to be intimidating.

Because, well. Tommy has his opinions, and has always had his opinions about the orphanage since the day he and Tubbo tried to rescue Ranboo (which is looked back on a hilarious and awkward moment, sans Ranboo’s trauma that he’s not going to address yet), and Ranboo

knows those opinions aren't of the *highest* kind. Tommy has said he would, quote, "beat them bitches up", if they ever came near Ranboo again.

Ranboo doesn't quite agree with it. He doesn't understand where personally he falls on the spectrum of feelings against his previous home. Because it's where he grew up for most of his life (except a few years with his biological parents, and the odd month-or-so that he's been with his adoptive family), it's where he formed as a *person*, it's where he became, well.

Himself.

It wasn't always good, and hurt people hurt people and created a vicious cycle, especially a little bit near the end there, with Sister Agnes.

Is he ever going to forgive them?

Fire, burning, charred remains of paper hitting the twilight sky like constellations.

... Not yet.

Maybe not *ever*, maybe someday in the future.

"C'mon, let's get going!" Tubbo says, impatiently pulling at Ranboo's sleeves. "Oh shit, wait, did you change up your costume?"

"Uh, yeah, Techno and I did. I wanted it to be closer to the book." You can still tell that it's, well. Frankenstein. But they took out the padded shoulders and gave the costume a more Victorian styled look, with an old white tunic that they stained with tea and leftover strawberries from one of Phil's rather unfortunate baking attempts. The choker with the metal knobs on the side is still wrapped around his neck and they're keeping the patchwork pants too, and you can tell it's Frankenstein.

"Fuckin' nerds!" Tommy laughs loudly.

"It looks good!" Tubbo says, absentmindedly scratching under the fur near his collar.
"Anyway, when it gets dark out, you can hardly tell what people look like, so we can get away with stuff easier."

Ranboo nods, and then his thoughts freeze.

"Get away with... what?"

Tubbo was only joking, of course. The worst mayhem the trio got up to as they went from door-to-door in Tubbo's neighborhood was having to hold Tommy back after a trio of boys dressed up as ninjas made fun of Tommy's cape, and all he could see was red after that.

No one was hurt, much. But Tubbo and Ranboo are limited in how much they can control Tommy. They can restrain him and pull him away from the conflict, bribing him with the candy in their own bags, but they can't stop him from sending a hurricane towards the boys who made fun of them.

It wasn't too strong of a wind, but one of the boys tripped and fell on his face and his nose did come up bleeding. Tommy laughed, of course, and the younger boys thought it was antagonizing, so they pulled Tommy away before any fight could begin.

There was also... *The chainsaw incident.*

A street away from Tubbo, a house was apparently rented out often to college students, and some party was going on there. Maybe if it had just been Tommy and Tubbo, they would have gotten into the party to cause some chaos, but because Ranboo both exists and needs guidance on his first-ever Halloween, they didn't go. He knows this, because that's what Tommy tells him as they pass it.

And then they turn around and see a masked college student, probably drunk or high or a horrible mixture of both, wielding a chainsaw. Standing in the middle of the road.

... A little traumatizing, sure, but it's a memory. A memory Ranboo scribbles anxiously in his journal, picking out a piece of candy from his tote bag and unwrapping it as he does. It's a chocolatey, nutty, toffee flavor that he immediately spits back into the wrapper and tosses into the small trash can under his desk. He makes a small note in the margins of the journal that whatever he just had wasn't good, because he knows himself.

He'd forget that he doesn't like that candy and eat it again and feel the immediate disgust.

Ranboo finishes the last thought on his page and sets down his pencil, and leans back into the chair. It'd been an hour since they got home after running around for what feels like a whole day. Tubbo lived in a large, affluent neighborhood, the one that Ranboo once wished to be a part of when he dreamed of adoption. The sort of mini-mansions that he'd see in passing, occasionally, staring out the window of the van as they went to the church Sunday mornings. Large homes that look like little castles, where he could imagine himself a better life.

He likes his home, though. It's mismatched, imperfect, and weird. And he wouldn't have it any other way.

Exhaustion tugs at him. Ever since he figured out his magic, it feels like something has finally settled in him, and he hasn't had a sleepwalking incident *since*. Knowing his own luck his thoughts would condemn him and jinx him immediately, but he prays that isn't the case as he shrugs off the sweaty, tea-stained shirt and throws on a loose t-shirt and changes into a pair of sweatpants to flop on his bed and stare up at his ceiling.

He can hear loud laughter and screams from the other side of the wall. Tubbo was over for the night, and he and Tommy were playing some horror game that Ranboo promptly opted out of. Not to mention he was exhausted from running around and being around people; and he just wanted to sleep.

His eyes flutter shut before he can even move to turn off his desk lamp that he accidentally leaves on a lot.

The peace is shattered when he feels a *yank*, and his eyes flutter open again, above his body, in the weird space in-between.

Dream is standing over him, just like that night weeks before. Except-- except-- he isn't in good shape. He's missing parts of his *body*, but not in a gory, bloody way. They're just not there, like it had been cropped out of a photo. Dream's left arm is missing his hand and forearm, and his legs are fading away out from under him. He looks paler, the strange rope around his waist is completely gone.

His mask is hanging off the side of his face, and he looks *afraid*.

"Ranboo!" Dream almost screams his name. It's raw and painful. "Ranboo, listen to me, you need to get Wilbur, and-- and Tommy, and Tubbo, and anyone else you can right now, and you need to get to where the others are immediately."

"What, wait-- why?"

"They're in trouble." Dream says, and winces, as if he's in pain. His left arm slowly starts to disappear from existence. "Shit, I'm waking up faster than I thought I would be. Ranboo, the others, Phil, Techno-- they're *losing*. They need help to retreat, and I--"

Dream screams out in pain again, and falls to his knees. Ranboo rushes down to help him immediately, but freezes when the older man chuckles.

"I'm really trapped, aren't I?" It's low, but just loud enough for Ranboo to hear. The quiet, pained voice.

It reminds him of--

Well, it reminds him of himself. Looking out the window of the orphanage, staring through the bars at night, hearing the sound of a lock click behind him. Ranboo looks at Dream and sees what he *was*, what he used to be.

And even though fun memories came from being raised in the orphanage with all the other kids, it wasn't the best place to be. And Ranboo looks at Dream and knows exactly how he's feeling, even though the eye contact makes him shrink in on himself and the face is blotchy and unrecognizable in Ranboo's brain.

"I'll help," Ranboo says.

No. He promises it.

He promises that he'll help.

"Thank you." Dream replies. It's still quiet, but it's louder now, at least.

"Wilbur, look out for the tree!"

"I'm fucking *watching it*, Tommy! Oh my god you're the *worst GPS* ever!"

Ranboo holds tight to whatever he can in the back seat. Wilbur's little yellow car is not made for driving through the woods, late at night, off-road, but it was faster than running. He finds

one arm wrapped around Tubbo's, and the other wrapped around the cupholder in the door next to him. He threw on a hoodie and sneakers before they immediately set off, and Wilbur isn't turning on the AC and it's loud and stressful, and Ranboo regrets existing just a little bit more.

Tubbo is cramped in the middle seat with no seatbelt on, and wraps both his arms around Ranboo and holds on tight. They also picked up Niki, the girl that Wilbur had been hanging out with while they were trick-or-treating.

There's something familiar about Niki that Ranboo can't place, but he doesn't have the time to.

Her face is a sour color that even he can see in the poor lighting, and it looks like she's trying to not be too nauseous as the car hits roots and rocks in the dirt and bounces up and down, with sharp turns every which way.

"Fucking-- god, left!" Tommy yells, looking up from the map he's spread out-- the one they took from Phil's office that showed where things were in the backwoods, from old school ruins to a bonfire pit and a cabin.

Speaking of, they swerve left, and in a few moments, they pass a cabin that has lights on inside, but looks very empty.

"Okay, it's, uh, fuck I can't read in this light." Tommy says, grabbing his phone and flipping the flashlight on, before shoving it in his mouth to use as an extra hand. Ranboo winces, wondering about all the germs that Tommy is definitely inadvertently licking off his screen, but they don't have the time to think about *that* right now. "We've got two miles to go!"

Since his phone was in his mouth, though, it sounded more like "*Weevth gotph tcwo milthes tco goh!*"

But the semantics, again, didn't matter, because they were unfortunately driving into a life-and-death situation to be backup and save people.

"Why is there ruins to a school all the way out here?" Ranboo mumbles, the thought only coming to his mind then.

"Phil said there used to be a pretty powerfully gifted person back in the, like, eighties, I think?" Tubbo replies in a hushed voice as he clings onto Ranboo's arm. "'M not good with dates--"

"Left, left!"

"I am going left!"

"No, your other left!"

"That's fucking *right*, you idiot!"

"I am going to die," Niki says. Ranboo agrees.

“-- and some big dreamon or other attacked the old high school, think it was the King? Anyway it basically used its magical energy to transfer the ruins of the old high school away. Everyone thought it was a boiler explosion--”

“There, right there! Oh my fucking god, there’s so many dreamons, what the fuck!”

“-- but it was... that.”

Ranboo perks up, and glances through the windshield to see dreamons. Not just one, or two, or even three, but many. So many, attacking so quickly, that it’s hard to count. They vary in size and shape, mostly amorphous bodies, but some of them form into nightmareish creatures, some with heads of deer and bears and others with creatures that Ranboo could never imagine but could see in a nightmare, if he ever dreamed.

A chill goes down his spine, and just when he thought the feeling would go away, it feels like his bones are ice and he’s suddenly so, so, so very cold.

“Alright, we got the weapons in the trunk, right?” Wilbur says, craning his neck back to look at the backseat passengers. They’d raided Phil’s office for whatever they could find marked with an amaryllis. They’d found a decent number of swords, mostly bent or defective in some way, left behind, a spear with a disproportionately small spearhead, and a few other weapons that they had raided from Techno’s room. It felt wrong to do it, but they needed all they could get.

“We have my wind, too.” Tommy interjects.

“And the trees will help.” Niki adds.

“I’ll be a human canon ball!” Tubbo cheers. A little too happily.

“And I’ll, um. Try not to die?”

“Good enough.” Wilbur takes a deep breath, groaning a bit. “God, I fucking hate dreamons.”

Me too, Wilbur. Ranboo thinks, as they jump out of the car and grab whatever weapons they can carry. *Me, too.*

Chapter End Notes

God, I love Halloween. Fun fact, the chainsaw story is based on something that actually happened to me and my friends when we were, like, ten. Everything about it-- the college house, the chainsaw-- haha, it's fun to trauma bond with your friends.

I hope it was a fake chainsaw, but they were drunk college students, so who knows.

That being said! This chapter is fun, isn't it? Halloween hijinks aside. Because, uh oh, some people are in troubleeeee~

See you tomorrow :)

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I'm Not Built For This Shit! I Say, Except I Don't Say "Shit" Because I Don't Like Cursing Aloud

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Ranboo doesn't think he'll have the stomach for anything again after what he runs into, holding a small sword and shield that they took from Techno's room close to him.

There's, well. Not *a lot* of people, but a decently-sized group, he imagines. A good seven people, most of which he recognizes barely as the people he's encountered accidentally during their planning meetings when he just wanted a yogurt cup or a glass of lemonade from the fridge. The whole area felt like *magic*, and felt charged, but also, it was filled with a vibrating hum of *death*, monsters, *dreamons*.

His demon comparison seems very apt as Tommy and Tubbo immediately begin tag-teaming larger dreamons, with Tommy's wind guiding Tubbo exactly like he said-- like a weapon. But he's also holding the spear that had the amaryllis engraving on it so when it pierces the skin of the dreamons it bursts into bright white light.

But he's never been in a battlefield before. Ranboo doesn't know *what* to do, or how he can help, or where he can go. He's never killed before. Does he have the strength for it? Does he actually *think*, no, *believe*, that he can do it?

All he's ever done is run away from dreamons, after all.

"Ranboo?!" A familiar voice calls his name. It's Phil, who runs in with a sword made of light and grabs him by his arm. "You-- what are you-- what are you guys doing here? You shouldn't be here!"

"Dream told us to come!" Ranboo yells back, over the roar of battle. It's quiet in the corner he's picked out, but it's going to make him a target, if he's not careful. "He said-- he said--"

Now that he looks around, there's a more people lying on the ground. He hopes they're not *dead*. He hopes and prays that no one is *dead* and they're all just hurt really bad, and that Techno can fix them. He sees the man run through the battlefield with just a rapier and crossbow attached behind his back, swinging violently, and as he passes people, the pink of his magic *sparkles* with his touch.

-- he said you guys needed help, and we've gathered what we could to help." His voice steadies, a bit. He doesn't think he can stomach actually fighting and killing dreamons, but he can... He can do something, right?

Phil laughs, giving him a broken smile and a pat on the back. "Thank you, Ranboo. Guess we are a little more outnumbered." He perks his head up and glances around. "You're not that much of a fighter, but you can teleport, yeah? Whatever wounded Techno can't get to, I need you to get them out of the way of danger, okay?"

Ranboo can't teleport with people, or, if he can, he hasn't fathomed the idea yet. Or tried, because he doesn't know how it *would* work with other people. If it even could. And he didn't want to risk it now, but he nods at the order, sheaths his sword and runs alongside the battle, looking for ways to get to the wounded without being made a target himself.

"Sapnap, look out!"

"Thanks, Gogy!" A burst of fire echoes out from somewhere, and he hears the sound of an arrow pierce something. It seems like Dream's friends-- Sapnap, and... Ugh, Gogy? That *couldn't* be his name, Ranboo doesn't remember it off the top of his head now but it'll come eventually-- are here, too.

Ranboo runs to the first person he can see and notices their leg is bleeding, a mixture of black dreamon blood and red human blood. They're trying to get onto their feet, but stumbling in pain.

"Here, let me help," Ranboo offers. They're shorter than he is (like everyone is, always), but he can crouch down enough to lend a shoulder and side for the stranger to lean up against.

"Thanks, man." They take a shaky breath. "You're Phil's new kid, right?"

"Yeah." Ranboo keeps his ears alert to listen to the fighting happening behind them. Nothing sounds like they're getting too close, and the best bet to get these people far away enough would be by Wilbur's car. It was quieter over there, and at the very least, the first-aid trunk was left *wide open* for people to run and get supplies if they needed them.

"Wish we could've met under better-- *fuck* -- circumstances." They cry out in pain as they walk poorly on their injured leg. "I'm Fundy."

"Nice to meet you." They're at the car, thank goodness, and Ranboo digs into the first aid trunk immediately. He doesn't know how to fix a big wound like that, but he tosses bandages towards Fundy, hoping that the other can at least figure out how to stop the bleeding. The shorter man catches them, and leans up against the fender of the car with his leg stretched out.

"Thanks,"

"I'll be back, I'm. Uh."

"Medic duty. Gotta save the injured." Fundy laughs. "Good luck out there, you'll need it."

"I know." He takes a deep breath, and pulls. "Thanks."

Snap.

He teleports himself forward to where he can see, and grabs another injured person, barely missing an attack. Not from a dreamon, but the tree roots under him and the fainted person come to life and stretch before wrapping around a dreamon and *squeezing*.

It's Niki. Her eyes are glowing a light green. Not neon, but so light it's almost *white*.

The dreamon is squeezed, and then explodes. It's far enough away where the splatter of dreamon *gunk* is only a light rainfall, but Ranboo still doesn't like the texture as he continues the game of finding an injured person and getting them out of immediate harm as carefully as he can.

It's probably not the *best* idea to be moving injured people like this. He remembers from somewhere he can't recall that you shouldn't move hurt people in big accidents like this, or else he could mess something else worse, kill them faster.

But dreamons lived and fed off pain and misery, and that included physical pain, too. So if they got the injured away from the fight, hopefully, it would make the dreamons weaker, right?

Not to mention that moving the injured away lets Techno get to them easier, and he's already fixed Fundy's leg and working one of the other people Ranboo has helped drag away from the fighting (there's seven people injured, hurt too hard to fight, *seven people*, what in the world?) that is also unconscious.

"Ranboo." Techno acknowledges him with a nod, as the lady that Ranboo is helping-- Puffy, her name is-- collapses next to a tree and holds her side close. He catches a roll of bandage thrown his way from Fundy and hands it to Puffy for her wounds.

"Hi. Anything I can do?"

"Nope." Techno replies, standing up from the unconscious body as it begins to glimmer with pink energy. "Unless you can teleport to a Starbucks and get me a black coffee with seven shot of espresso."

"That sounds... dangerous."

"Don't judge how I live my life." Techo retorts. He glances around. "Anyone *else* in immediate risk of death?"

A beat.

"And I mean dying breath. Final words. Not feeling like crap."

A hand goes down out of the corner of his eye.

"Alright, pog." Techno winces at the phrasing but pretends he isn't picking up on Tommy's vocab. He turns back to the car, and digs through the medical trunk that is always in the back of Wilbur's car. He pulls out a few bottles of iridescent liquid that Ranboo hadn't noticed. "Good, Wilbur has some potions on him."

Ranboo watches as Techno juggles the bottles of liquid before passing them out to the people who aren't seriously injured. He tosses one to Fundy, who takes a swig of it and starts coughing immediately.

"You haven't learned to make these taste better yet, man?!" Fundy asks, his voice cracking. His leg, wrapped horribly with bandages, starts to shimmer with magic similar to Techno's, except it isn't the pink glow. It's more of an iridescent, white shimmer than the pink one he's familiar with.

Not because Ranboo gets injured too much, mind you. He's just seen it enough and remembers *that specific detail*, for whatever reason.

"Make 'em taste too good, you get addicted." Techno replies bluntly. "Once you're feeling better, help get the other injured to Puffy's cabin. Do you have any healing potions there, Puffy?"

The curly haired woman that Ranboo just helped shakes her head. "No, but I have the ingredients to make some. I can whip some up."

"Good, do that."

Puffy nods, and those who were given the potions stood up, still slightly injured, but they were able to move. Like Fundy, who downed the rest of the potion and groaned, before tossing the empty bottle to Ranboo and standing up, nervously kicking his wounded leg like he expects it to fall back apart again, tail swishing behind him--

Oh, well. That was a detail that Ranboo definitely *missed* beforehand.

Those who could move helped those who couldn't, carrying them or being a crutch to those who needed it. Despite the retreat, the fatigue of fighting, the injuries, the pain, they didn't look defeated.

No one looked defeated.

Techno sighs, standing next to Ranboo.

"It's cause they have hope."

"...What?"

"You just asked why no one looked ashamed in retreating." Techno says, glancing over.

There's screaming, but it's not bad screaming-- it's Tubbo screaming, loud and chaotic and powerful, as he spears through a dreamon. His spear had shattered from his mere strength, and he was using the spearhead and broken end to be weapons. The purifying magic still worked, surprisingly enough. Breathless laughter from Tommy, as he throws a few dreamons into the air and impales them on ice spikes from Wilbur's ice.

Fire and arrows mix together as Dream's friends fight on, still. A few other adults remain, too, but their numbers are dropping quickly. Instead of letting themselves get hurt more, they manage to do their best and pawn their enemy off on someone else before heading in the direction of the cabin.

Silent and quick, Phil destroying dreamons in mere seconds. With the injured away from the main battleground, he's able to really fight.

Ranboo can't help but feel a little transfixed by it all. He can't ever see himself fighting like that-- it just doesn't work with his imagination.

But it's a little transfixing to watch and *wonder*, what it would be like, if he had the skill.

"Oh. Did I?"

"Yep." Techno nods. He retrieves his rapier from where he'd stabbed it in the ground. The moment he pulls it from the ground it glows a bright white, erupting from the tip and traveling up to the handle where he grips it with one hand, casually, but with the skill of ten men. "I don't know how good you'd be at fighting these things, so you might wanna stand back."

Ranboo nods. He knows he isn't good at fighting and he watches as Techno leaps back into battle. Like he isn't drained of energy himself, like he isn't fatigued at *all*.

And the fight continues; like it probably had been for hours before Ranboo had gotten everyone together after Dream's frantic message, before Wilbur had pushed everyone into the car and drove to Niki's as quickly as he could and hit the edge of the road by the woods and kept driving through the night.

There's no moon out. Or, there is, technically-- the moon is always present at night-- but it doesn't reflect the sun. It's pure black. The light comes from Wilbur's car, headlights turned on low but on, the stars that twinkle in the sky, and Phil's magic.

"Anyone have a lighter?" The voice breaks him out of his immersion.

"We have Sapnap!"

"Even *better!* Get over here!"

He watches as Sapnap lights himself on fire and runs towards another person Ranboo doesn't recognize, who grabs onto Sapnap's hand and *also* lights on fire. Some sort of magic-copying ability?

Well, does it matter? Ranboo's job is to just be a watcher now. Idle. Aside. He doesn't mind, he doesn't pretend he minds, because dreamons are *scary*. They're terrifying to deal with alone. He can't remember anything very well but he remembers what it felt like for something to be feasting on his pain and misery.

It was him and Sister Agnes, the victims of a creature's cruel torture to *eat*. A hunter slowly killing its prey.

He shudders at the thought, of picking at the scab of a memory. Maybe it's not truly healed yet, maybe burning it away to where he hopes he'll forget it isn't the best idea, but it's how it is sometimes.

In the middle of his thoughts, he feels it. He feels the cold feeling in his chest grow, just like it had at the beginning, but this time. It was worse.

Ranboo backs away slowly from the car, noticing the light reflect on something's eyes in the shadows that he can't see.

And, of course.

The dreamon lunges.

This time isn't like other times. Ranboo has a weapon and he can *kill* it, he can defend himself just like he usually does, but he pulls and snaps out of the way before the creature can bring its claws down to attack.

It blinks in confusion, sniffing the air before turning quickly to where Ranboo had teleported, a few feet away, behind it. He wasn't the most stealthy, he was standing in the light of the goddamnn *headlights* of the car, casting his shadow over the forest. And he was breathing heavily and panting as fear was taking ahold of his body.

Ranboo dropped his shield somewhere in looking for people to help, so he could have both arms, but he doesn't remember-- where-- he-- put it--

It growls. It snarls. It smells like sewage and the gross chocolate-toffee-candy that he spit out earlier that night.

"Ranboo!"

It's Phil, again. He notices the shadow that Ranboo gives off, and the shadow that the dreamon is giving off as it approaches him, slowly. He watches as Phil leaps, and the white, magical, light energy of his gift swirls not just around his hands and it spreads over his chest, stretches out behind his back, forming into the shape of two white wings.

An angel.

He flaps the wings to propel himself further in the air and swipes with his sword. It goes through the dreamon's neck and cuts off the head in a gory display of power, but it burns and cauterizes the wound immediately. The creature twitches before falling limp, and then melting into the dirt.

Phil lands right next to him. The wings are almost a little too bright for him to look at directly, so he looks at Phil's face. Under Phil's face. More approximately, his chin, but he doesn't look for long as Phil immediately grabs him by his shoulders.

"Are you alright? You were being...."

Attacked? Fed on? Not the first time, Ranboo thinks. He swallows hard, before nodding. "Just didn't expect it, I'm okay."

Phil nods, before wrapping his arms around Ranboo and pulling him in tightly. The wings wrap around them, a protective shield, and it's warm. The cold feeling in his chest fades into

a warmer one.

The dreamons weren't willing to get too close to the car's headlights because it was light, and Phil, *the angel of Hope*, stood right next to them. It was a quaint little protection, as Phil's group and the younger ones regrouped a few moments later.

"There's so many of them, I don't know how it's possible." Sapnap pants. His hair is slightly singed, just like a good number of trees around.

"It's Dream. He's acting as an infinite energy supply for the King." Phil replies. His wings have shrunk a little bit in size, but they're still spread out, and if they were *real*, Ranboo could imagine the feathers bristling in anger and stress. "The King can create as many dreamons as long as he has Dream hooked up as a messed-up generator.

"Then why was our plan to go all out and *attack*?!"

"That wasn't exactly our plan, Quackity." Techno interrupts. "The plan was to take the attention of the dreamon guards and I would get in there and get Dream out, but there were too many for me to leave you guys alone to fend against them."

It seems like Dream's rescue was...

...hopeless.

If it can just keep making them-- we can never get past that. Ranboo glances at the ruins of the school. He can barely make out the name of the local high school, as the roof caved in, submerged in the ground. *They can never get past that.*

Phil sighs, looking at who remains after the fight that *should* be there. It's Sapnap and the other Dream friend, the Quackity dude, and another person Ranboo doesn't recognize, who is fighting in platform shoes in a way that should be physically impossible but it's *working*. He doesn't want to ask how they're doing it. "I mean, there's always--"

"No." Techno interrupts again.

"Techno, if I can just--"

"No, we're *not doing that*, Phil . ." Ranboo hasn't known Techno for too long, or hung around him enough to hear more emotion than "excitement but I'm burying it to be cool", "whatever" or "Tommy is being annoying send help" in his voice, but the way his voice wavers when he finishes brushing out dried dreamon blood in his hair, the way he *looks* at Phil-- it's a whole different level.

Ranboo glances back. Wilbur, Tommy and Tubbo were on the other side of the car. He doesn't know why he isn't standing over there-- except for the fact that Phil is refusing to let him leave his side.

(He's a bit of a... target, *apparently* .

After being attacked by dreamons so much, he must be prone or *something*, which definitely isn't fair and he would be complaining to God in a very strongly-worded prayer when they get out of their current predicament.)

"Techno, mate--"

"We're *not* risking it. We're not risking *you*." The younger (?) sighs. "Phil, Phil. Listen to me, I-- you know how long I've been living. And death-- it never gets easier. And you're thinking about walking *straight* into it. I'm not going to let you do that. We need to retreat, regroup, and think of another plan."

"Tech--"

"No. Phil. Please. I... I don't want to lose *anyone else*, okay?" His voice cracks, and a beat of silence follows. Techno clears his throat, realizing there was more than just him and Phil present. "...Plus I don't want to be stuck with your kids if you die. Especially Tommy. He's annoying."

Phil breathes. His wings shrink down, fade out of view. "...You're right. We need to get the kids out of here, first and foremost. Everyone who retreated... went to Puffy's..."

Ranboo leans back against the car because, suddenly, the world is starting to spin a bit. It feels like something is tugging at him.

He doesn't know what it is.

His head feels light. His entire body feels light. Not the way it feels when he teleports-- the sudden lack of gravity it leaves him with, the buzz in his body as he pulls and snaps and *vwoops* around. Ranboo's still learning his limits, but he's hardly used his magical gift today, so why is he--

His ears are ringing. It looks like Phil is calling his name, but he can't hear it, because one moment he's there, standing next to the car, because Phil doesn't want him in any more danger and Ranboo isn't sure why aside from the fact he's the one kid of his that can't protect himself very well, and the next--

he's

not.

Chapter End Notes

Can we all just get an F in the chat for Ranboo, who is suffering from a severe case of Main Character syndrome? Like, youch. He can't catch a break today, can he?

He JUST learned how to control his magic, and now he's basically off in a war. Pretty unwillingly, though I'm sure he could've passed on going with everyone, he probably didn't think of that after he was told "HEY UR FAM IS IN TROUBLE BRUH".

I also didn't know what sort of purpose he could have had in a big battle like this, so he was basically playing medic and getting people out of the way. Is it good to move them? Probably, most definitely *not*, but remember that dreamons feed on misery and pain, and being in physical pain is basically just giving the monsters you're fighting regeneration, so it's probably better to get them OUT OF THERE so you can actually kill them.

I lost track of who was all fighting this, I threw in Dream SMP character names mostly randomly, though if any cc I mentioned in the story feels uncomfortable ever, I'll come back and change their name to someone else or make it just a random name.

ALSO uh oh Ranboo what happened to you at the end there hope that isn't a sign of what's to come

See you tomorrow!

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A Prayer to Saint Michael

Chapter Summary

cw:

- some body horror
- nightmare-ish sequence? idk what to call it
- bad memories, psychological trauma, stuff like that

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"I'm so, so sorry, Ranboo. I'm sorry I just pulled you like this--"

He blinks, slowly, disoriented. His head is spinning a bit, but he can recognize a neon green hoodie anywhere.

"...Dream?"

There's not much left of him. He's missing his left arm, he's just a torso and a head and a right arm, but he's standing. Or floating.

They're in a room, actually. A big one. It looks like what Tommy talks about when he mentions a school gym-- though, it's a bit smaller, because half of it is caved-in, but there's a lot of animal carcasses around, and a large mound of--

Oh.

Oh, Ranboo doesn't like to curse, he was raised to not, specifically, by the Sisters, to never take the Lord's name in vain, but he feels like God would forgive him because he's somehow in the same room as the *fucking King of Dreamons*.

It's large, with limbs sticking out of every direction. Not just four normal limbs, but Ranboo can see human-like arms and legs sticking out of its back. He can see bird wings, smaller than the rest of its body, curled up. It has seven different tails, but it doesn't move.

One of the limbs falls off the King, hits the ground with a gross splat. Ranboo is so glad he can't smell it, but he gags reflexively anyway, as he watches two horrifying things at once. The spot regrows the limb almost instantly, and the fallen-off body part begins to swell up. It grows another limb-- horrifying, because it's another set of human-like-arms, and the two more, and it forms a body and scampers off, a newly-made dreamon.

"Ranboo, look." Dream's voice breaks him out of the horror. He turns to the man, and sees two of him. Except one of them is fading from existence, and the other is wrapped up in

dreamon-gunk human arms, twisting around his body, keeping him captive. His hair is a little longer and more unkept, his clothes are dirty from dreamon body gunk, and his body is limp.

Breathing, but limp.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to do this to you. I'm waking up, and I don't have a lot of control over anything right now..."

Ranboo nods, listening to him prattle off. He glances through the apparition-Dream to the real life Dream. His mask has been abandoned, and he can see, despite the fact that he's been asleep this whole time (or, well, for a long time), Ranboo can see how thin and tired he is. Not how his sleeping-form would present itself, but he can see how it raged a mental and physical war on him.

He glances around the room again, at the dreamon. It's large. Bigger than anything he's ever seen, not as large as giants or leviathans that he would read about but still, big. Most of its body is a solid mass of whatever it is that the creatures are made of, with the limbs sticking out in every angle, but it doesn't look like it moves.

At all.

It snores, even-- he notices it because it sounds like the roll of thunder in the middle of a storm, but it doesn't move. Except for the limbs occasionally detaching, and forming a dreamon, and it's gross but he can't help but stare at it.

It's like a queen bee.

His memories flash back to one of his school lessons-- a weird, merged science class that goes over the basics of environmental science stuff, one of the *first science classes* he's ever taken-- and how one of his classmates did a project on bees. He wrote it down to tell Tubbo about it, because Tubbo likes bees.

The King is what *makes* the dreamons-- and the dreamons are its workers. So it basically does nothing. He'd hardly call that a threat.

"Ranboo, I--" Dream sighs. He rubs at his face, which even in his apparition state, is now becoming thin, tired, and weakened. Blotchy, too, from crying. *"No one's died, right?"*

"No." I don't think so. I don't know. He helped them get out of danger. Techno healed them. They were all walking to someone's cabin. He wishes he could remember who the cabin belonged to, but his memory is awful, as per usual.

"That's good. I don't know what I-- Fuck." Dream shudders. *"Sorry, I can get you back to your body in a second, I just--"*

Dream's magic. The thing that brought him here. Ranboo glances around the collapsed ingym, taking in as many details as he can.

He's never teleported with another person. Tubbo has volunteered, a few times, to be the guinea pig, but Ranboo is just slowly becoming more confident in his magic. Phil is saying

it's finally stabilized, but they shouldn't risk it too much just yet.

But.

But it's worth a shot, isn't it?

"I'm going to come and get you." Ranboo says. He says it before he even thinks about it, and he says it more confidently than he's ever said anything before. Which feels good.

"... *What*?"

"My magic. I can see what room you're in, I can teleport in and teleport you out."

Because he has a chance. He has a *shot*, to try and help out. And even though he hates dreamons and everything they live for (are they even living? They're monsters, *demons*, do they count?), he remembers Tommy and Tubbo. He remembers his friends-- his family.

They risked themselves by trying to break him out that night, so long ago. It worked out in the end, after they were banned from ever seeing him again by Sister Agnes.

"*You think?*" Dream chuckles.

"I've never teleported with someone else before, but... Hopefully it isn't too hard!"

"*Wait, you've never done it before?!*"

"No." Ranboo replies. He pauses. Thinks about what he's going to say. Does he really want to spill this to a man who was pretty much equivalent to a stranger?

... No. Dream wasn't a stranger. A stranger wouldn't try and help him understand and figure out his magic. Dream was a friend.

"A long time ago, I was trapped, too. Not by dreamons-- or, well, kinda for a bit near the end but that's a different story-- but by actual people, and..." He takes a deep breath.

It was other people who helped him out. It was Tubbo and Tommy being dumb and reckless and loving and kind and reaching out, from the moment that he was knocked over in that park that one summer day, to the kindness and compassion they've put forward.

Phil didn't have to adopt him. Phil didn't have to get *attached* to him, at all, but he did, anyway-- willingly or unwillingly. He didn't have to bribe Techno to stand in and adopt him to trick the Sisters, he didn't have to go through all the work for him, but he *did*, because he *cared* about Ranbo. Wilbur, Techno-- they're older and a little more distant than the rest of the family, but they reach out in their own ways. Supportive, driving him to mass on Sundays even though he's the only one who ever goes, teaching him how to use a sword to protect himself, just in case, they never *had* to do that.

Yet they did it, anyway.

He could never thank them enough. Sitting on the porch and crying his heart out, the warmth of his family around him, no words could ever be enough.

But...

“...I think it’s about time I pay it forward.”

Because if he can’t thank the people who saved him, he can use that same energy towards someone else. *Within reason*, a part of him whispers in the back of his mind, as he glances to the sleeping King behind the apparition of Dream.

The apparition of one of his friends.

Dream laughs. A genuine laugh, and it looks like he’s crying. Good tears, though. His other arm is starting to fade. “*Alright, but don’t die. If you die, Phil is going to kill me, figure out necromancy to bring both of us back, and he’s going to kill me again.*” He sighs, looking back at his body. “*You think you can do it?*”

“Yes.” *Only one way to find out*, the nasty voice in the back of his head says. But he has to. He has to believe in himself.

“*Alright.*” Dream says. “*I’m waking up soon, I have to send you back. I’m not going to be the same person. Probably cranky and tired. Just thought I’d give you a heads-up.*”

Ranboo feels something push his soul back before he can even reply.

“... *Calm down, Phil, he’s waking up.*” Techno’s voice slowly fades in as Ranboo blinks, coming to.

He’s lying on the cold ground-- it’s damp, too, and if that’s dreamon blood he’s laying in, he’s going to need an extra-long shower after everything. But he didn’t want to know, he didn’t want to look down and see what he fell into, and he *prays* that it was just mud.

The light from the car and from Phil is enough to see, and is almost a little blinding. Actually-- the whole man is just. *Literally* glowing. The dreamons aren’t coming any closer to the light, which is really nice, scared by the power of technology and the power of Phil.

But, well. Ranboo lets himself get pulled up by Phil and fret over.

“This is exactly why I don’t want to bring you kids out on these sorts of things,” he tutts, brushing some dirt off Ranboo’s hoodie that wasn’t (hopefully, Ranboo is praying that it is just) mud. “You didn’t hit your head on the car when you fell, did you?”

“I’m okay,” Ranboo replies. It’s weird to be worried over *like this*, but given the fact that they are in a stressful, deadly situation, he doesn’t push it away. It’s just awkward.

Like he usually is.

"Good, good." Phil sighs. It looks like the other adults who were around are gone, and it's just him, Phil, and Techno. Even Wilbur, Tommy, Tubbo and Niki were gone.

How long was he out?

"Everyone else has gone back to Puffy's cabin, we should probably head back too." Phil says, glancing over at Techno, who heaves a large, double-sided axe over his shoulder. It has a small little cord fall off the bottom of it, with an amaryllis charm and another charm of a funny looking pig face.

No. He has a chance. Ranboo glances at Phil, at Techno, and feels his heartbeat speed up. They won't let him go naturally, but.

Hey.

He can *literally* just go wherever he wants. The memory of the gym room is still fresh in his mind.

It's a bad idea to do this. He recognizes how bad of an idea it is to do this.

But if he has a chance to help someone, to pay it forward, using his own magic, his own energy, then by God, was he going to do it.

"Ranboo?"

"I'm sorry, Phil." He says, quickly, taking a few steps backward-- away from them, towards the ruins of the school. "I'll be right back."

He thinks of the gym room. He pulls.

"Ranboo, no--!"

Snap.

Vwoop.

He has to hold his breath as he feels himself land in the gym. The smell is overwhelming and overpowering, it's the worst thing he's ever smelled. Tommy's room got a little messy sometimes, and maybe there would be the occasional stale pizza box shoved into his trashcan that he was too lazy to take out, but by then, Wilbur would be yelling at him.

Even at the orphanage, it was kept pretty clean. The boy's bathroom could get nasty, occasionally, but if it wasn't Ranboo cleaning it, one of the sisters would get on someone's case to do so. Which was always good.

He's never smelled rotting flesh before, but his brain clocks the smell as *just that*. Rotting flesh, decaying organisms, *death*, and an unexpected smell that was both fruity and garlicky.

There's no time to think about that, though, because he's in the room with the *King* of dreamons again. The dreamon *King*. And attached to its side, like a reverse-parasite, is the limp body of Dream, the person they all came to save.

He doesn't want to breathe for a second, in fear of alerting the King, but he still clenches his fists as he makes his way over, as quietly as he can, a familiar prayer ringing out in his head.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.

Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil;

The King shifted in its sleep, stretching out a few limbs. Ranboo freezes because his mind immediately yells, *it's making something it's making a dreamon bad idea abort abort* but nothing happens.

He takes more careful steps forward. The gym floor is covered in layers of mud and blood (and, it doesn't look like mostly dreamon blood, unfortunately), and the only light there is comes through the caved-in roof, that looked like it would fall even more if anything too big happened in that room.

The King waking up would *definitely* cause something worse to happen, so he holds his breath and bites his tongue to try and be more quieter.

May God rebuke him, we humbly pray;

And do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God,

He's close enough to reach out to Dream. The smell has grown the closer he's gotten, and Ranboo wonders if some of it is coming off an infection from Dream. Whatever wounds Dream would have, hopefully could be fixed by Techno. Or a trip to the hospital.

thrust into hell Satan and all evil spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls,

He reaches out, wrapping his arms around Dream's waist. There are still human-like dreamon arms wrapped around the man like a strange hug, but they fall away easily when Ranboo pulls. It's like fishing something out of a puddle of mud, or something to that extent. The arms fall apart in strings of muscle and dreamon, and Dream stumbles into his arms.

“Huh...what...?”

Amen.

“Ran...Ranboo...?” His voice is much more hoarse than it was when he was asleep. “Fuck, what, what's happening? Where am I?”

The King shifts again in its sleep. Ranboo feels his heart drop at it, and his hands feel cold. He is still holding Dream up, the man doesn't seem to have enough energy to walk.

“Shh--” Ranboo hushes, quickly. He drops his voice as quiet as he can muster it. “Alright, time to get out of here.”

Ranboo reaches down and focuses on the pull again, and--

The King growls.

It's awake.

The monster pushes itself up using some of its many limbs. Ranboo can recognize some as those from a horse, from a human, from bears, but others seem to be animals he can't remember or animals that haven't existed in a long time. It keeps its head low, low enough so it wouldn't hit the ceiling and cause more of it to splinter off and fall.

This isn't good. This is the opposite of good.

Human.

Oh, and it talks, too. *Great.*

What are you doing with my pet?

Before Ranboo can think of a response, the King growls.

"Okay, yeah, we're running." Dream is able to stand on his own by that point, and Ranboo lets go of the awkward hug and wraps his hand around Dream's arm and pulls. He's surprisingly easy to yank around, surprisingly light.

Not a good sign, but Ranboo figures, it's probably better to get out of there before anything worse happens.

He runs in the first direction he can find away from the king, and through a set of double-doors out into a hall. He just needs to keep running until he finds an exist, right?

Hopefully that should be easier than it looks. The halls of the ruined high school are an eerie silent and are pretty dark. Some light is coming in through the ceiling, of the stars that are shining, and he wonders if Phil is bringing out more light to help aid Ranboo (or look for him).

Dream is panting and breathing heavily. He's limping now. "Can't... run..."

Of course. *Of course.* Ranboo tries to internalize his groan as much as he can, and he slings one of Dream's arms over his shoulders. It's easier to do this with Dream than it is with Tubbo after he sprained something in the orchard and Tommy wasn't around to help, and they had to wobble back to the house awkwardly.

It's not time to reminisce on good memories, though, because as he drags Dream as quickly as he can with the extra, dead weight-- there's an unfortunate *not much to Dream* anymore, but at the same time, he's got enough weight on him to cause them both to slow down-- but it's not fast enough.

You won't escape, human child.

My knights are on the hunt,

and you are the prey.

Of course, of course. He turns down a hallway and sees dreamons blocking it off. There's too many of them to fight, and Ranboo turns back to find a different way out. Because there has to be, right?

He keeps trying to pull on his magic. Get them both out of there. But the pull isn't coming. His magic is failing him when he needs it most.

Am I a failure?

The thought sprouts out from nowhere, and he shakes it off.

You are foolish, human child.

That, Ranboo can definitely agree with. This is the dumbest thing he's ever done. The riskiest. He's never going to do anything like this again.

If Phil asks him to be a dreamon hunter, if he wants to be trained like Tommy and Tubbo are, Ranboo will have to pass. He can be the one that stays back so when Tommy and Tubbo get home they have someone who can heal them that isn't dead on his own two feet. Sure, he'll train so he can protect himself, but he's not going to actively go out searching for these things.

You're already falling to my influences.

Influences, what?

Oh. The cold feeling is growing as he's running. It reminds him of-- it reminds him off--

He ducks down another hallway, which seems pretty empty. The lockers are shaking though, with loud footsteps of something coming behind him. The king, probably.

Great. Great.

Dream is barely conscious. He probably doesn't understand anything that's happening. Or he's too weak to comment on anything, to help out.

Ranboo glances back and sees only darkness. He isn't used to the halls of a high school, he has no idea where he is going, or what he is doing, and he doesn't have anywhere to run.

There you are.

Ranboo blinks, and suddenly, the darkness of the king engulfs him.

He can still feel Dream's arm wrapped around his shoulder, the feeling of the man's unsteady breathing from Ranboo's arm that's wrapped around his side, trying to keep him up and

walking, but he feels... Smaller.

He blinks as the darkness fades, and he notices a few things.

One, that it's raining.

Two, that he's standing on the porch of the orphanage.

Three, he's facing his parents.

Not Phil— but his biological, real parents. His mom, his dad— right in front of him.

It's a memory. It's a memory he remembers barely, most of the time.

Just the feeling of rain, leaning against the door, waiting to be let in. Sister Anne hearing his knocking and letting him in, giving him a warm hug and holding on. That's what he remembers, if he remembers anything.

Not his actual parents.

The cross around his neck, hidden under his shirt, begins to burn. Not a hot kind of burn, but it's cold. Ice-cold. It's noticeable, but it's overshadowed by everything else.

Their faces are blurs— more than they usually are, with his face blindness, but he can tell they're his parents. They both have awkwardly long limbs, they both have the same dark hair. He can see small graying hair in his mother's hair-- the premature graying is a family trait, then.

They're his mom and his dad.

He watches them stand, huddled under an umbrella together. His mom is crying. His dad has his arm wrapped around her shoulders, just like Ranboo is doing to Dream, right now.

He can't hear anything but the blood in his own ears, and then the world begins to melt around him. He watches the bodies of his parents melt away as the scene changes.

Is this what Dream is going through, *awake*? Is that why he's catatonic?

The scene changes again and he's a little taller now, and he's watching a fire burn. He's holding his journal. His old journal.

The one that burned.

Sister Agnes is there. Her face is morphed into a grotesque caricature of it, and even though she still has her habit on, two other faces poke out on the sides of her face of the other sisters, Sister Maria and Sister Joan. They both are extremely pale, and their eyes are hollow and black.

Tick, tock.

There's no clock around, and Ranboo backs away, slowly. Even though he's holding his journal close to his chest he can still feel his arm wrapped around Dream, but it's too dissonant to pull him out of whatever *this* is.

"Ranboo." Sister Agnes' voice is a mixture of all three nuns. It's horrible. It's grating, nails on a chalkboard. "Ranboo, don't make this harder for yourself."

"No, no, this isn't real--"

"Burn it, Ranboo."

"Burn it," the hollow faces also command.

It's not real, but it feels so real, at the same time. It's not like nightmares, or dreams, that he thinks he has but can never remember, it's real but not real. It's paradoxical.

The nuns grab him by the arms and pull him into the fire. The book goes in, first, and then--

And then--

He's pushed in, too. With his book.

The fire burns and stings at his skin, and it feels like the cold feeling goes away instantly, replaced by a feverish, hot one, because he's burning. He can feel the charring of his skin, as the old journal turns to ash in his very hands, except for one--

One piece of paper. One scrap. *Magic*.

Magic. Magic, magic, magic.

The word runs through him like blood, and the burning stops.

The world goes quiet, before it melts around him again. It's changing so quickly, he's having a hard time remembering what is happening. He can't focus.

Ranboo is--

Is that his name?

Is Ranboo his name?

His memories are scattered. He can hardly understand what's happening, he can hardly feel the man-person wrapped around him, but he's still there. Something has shattered, like glass, and he's picking up the glass shards and it feels like he's cut his hands open.

He's wearing his sweatshirt. He's wearing a suit, like he's at a funeral. A cloak. A suit again, but one much more formal. He's wearing a t-shirt. He's--

Ranboo, Ranboo, Ranboo--

It feels hopeless.

It feels like he's going to be lost in this inky black void forever...

Something tugs at his neck. The cross. He reaches up and pulls it out from underneath his sweatshirt.

Holding it steadies the blood rushing in his ears. Holding it reminds him about who is leaning against him for support, for help, Dream. It reminds him of--

Of--

Of Sister Anne.

Of good memories. Of waking up to help her make breakfast, to help her take care of the youngest who could barely walk and talk. Of getting the phone, sitting on that swing on a Sunday morning and listening to the songs that had been downloaded.

Burn like a star, light a fire in my heart-- my light house, my light house-- shining through the darkness--

The darkness fades again, and he's standing again outside the orphanage. But he's not small again. He's tall. He's *himself*, and he's right next to his parents.

The rain drops through him like he's a spectre. He looks at his parents-- closer, this time. His father has a bit of discernable stubble and a dimple on his chin, and his mother has the same dark hair, with premature graying in it, that he does, wrapped tightly behind her head in a bun. They're both dressed nicely.

Like for a funeral.

"We have to do this." His mother says. He hears her voice, and it's like honey. It's soft, it's gentle, it reminds him of Sister Anne's laughter.

"I know." His father says. It's deeper, but it's warm, too.

His parents. A family he could have-- he *should have* had. Abandoning him.

"It's only for a few days, though." His father says, again. Ranboo perks up at that.

...What?

"I know. I trust Sister Anne." His mother chuckles, but she's obviously still upset over it. A few tears are hitting her cheeks, but it's raining and they're washed away. "She's the one who raised me, I would trust her with my son's life."

They knew each other. Sister Anne knew his parents. The thought feels like a hurricane hitting his chest, but he stays quiet, despite it.

"It's only for a few days." His father repeats. "Once we get to your aunt's, we'll take care of *whatever* dreamon is hunting us. And then we'll come back and pick Ranboo up, and it'll be like nothing ever happened."

A dreamon was hunting them.

It feels like the shattered glass is being slowly glued back together. His hands still feel cut up, he still feels charred and burnt, but. It makes a little more sense, now.

Something was hunting his parents. A dreamon. They were magic, too-- something similar to what he had, then? Some sort of magic like his?-- and they were going to his aunt.

He has an aunt out there. He has family.

"Bobbie--" His father says, looking at his mother.

Bobbie. His mom's name was Bobbie.

"It'll be fine."

"I know, Randall, I know." *His dad had a name!*

Bobbie and Randall.

Randall and Bobbie and Ran...boo.

So *that's* how he got his name.

"Let's get back to the car." His father says as they turn around.

His parents didn't mean to leave him at the orphanage. They didn't mean to abandon him, did they? They just wanted him safe for a few days, in the care of Sister Anne, someone they trusted. They didn't mean to leave him.

Ranboo glances back up. He notices that his mother is looking at him now. Not his younger-self, standing at the door of the orphanage, as his memory already cracks and washes away with the storm around him, but *himself*. As he is.

"Oh, Ranboo." His mother says. "We didn't mean to leave you."

She glances back to the car that is parked outside the orphanage. The headlights are on.

"We never made it to my aunt's." His mother says. "The dreamon-- the King-- found us before we even left the state. It was a car accident, and we were never identified." She takes a shaky breath, before turning back to Ranboo.

"Oh." He replies. Because it's all he can say. *Oh.*

"I-- I am so sorry that you thought we left you. We never meant to." She doesn't have the umbrella anymore, and he hears the distant sound of a car engine starting, but before he knows it, he's wrapped in the arms of his mother. His *real* mother.

"It's okay." Ranboo says. "It's-- you couldn't have controlled that."

"I know," she says, pulling back and wiping tears from her face. She glances down. "You have Sister Anne's cross."

He nods.

"Good. It'll protect you, and help lead you out." She says. She lets go from the hug. "I'm so glad that Phil adopted you. He's a good man. He loves you a lot, and that's all I could ever ask for. Someone to take care of my son."

Ranboo nods. Phil does love him, even if he's going to absolutely kill him and find out how to raise the dead after this whole fiasco. Ranboo deserves it a bit, he thinks, for running off like that.

"Your dad and I love you, and we're so proud of you and who you've become." She ruffles his hair a bit, and she has to stretch to do so. "Sister Anne is proud of you, too. We all love you, Ranboo. But it's time for you to get out of here, and save Dream."

Ranboo nods. The warmth of his mother scares away any of the icy feeling in his chest, because he knows. He *knows*, he knows, he knows. He won't let himself forget it. He'll keep replaying the memories in his head for as long as he can focus on them.

The world goes dark again, and fades back into the hallways of the school.

...Human child, how have you--?

At the sound of the King's voice, Ranboo shudders, but reality settles around him. He's not in the hallway anymore-- if anything he's on the other side of the King that had cornered him, out of harm's way. The king has shrunk, a bit, from when he last remembered. Less limbs.

The longer he's not connected to Dream, the weaker he is, a smart part of his brain says.

But Ranboo isn't interested in debating with something that killed his parents, so he hoists Dream up with newfound strength and *books it* away as fast as he can.

He runs as fast as he can. Dream is breathing even heavier, and he's basically being carried by Ranboo at this point. The dreamons he run by hesitate before running in the other

direction, to the king that calls them back. That's probably not a good sign, but he can't give up just yet.

Not after everything.

"C'mon, Dream, stay awake..." Ranboo mumbles.

It's chaotic. It's nightmarish.

Despite it, he pushes through.

"C'mon, Dream, we gotta keep moving--"

"What's the point?" Hearing Dream's voice makes his brain stutter for a second, but he doesn't stop running. "I almost led the people I loved to their graves. I've lied to them for years about who I am. And it's bad out there. At least with-- with the King, I didn't have to deal with suffering."

"Oh, no, you're not pulling *that* on me." Ranboo replies, probably in the rudest way he ever has. He can feel the warmth exploding from the necklace under his sweatshirt. "We're almost out. Everyone misses you so much. Why do you think they put so much work into finding you?"

Dream's silent, for a minute.

"I... I'm not strong enough. I can't do this." Dream says.

He wonders what it would be like to be in his shoes. When the man first started appearing in his room at night Ranboo thought that he was strong. Confident. Having powerful magic relating to dreams ought to make one confident in their own abilities. But what's standing before him is a hollow husk. His dream-self is in there, but the effects of not just a dreamon, but the KING dreamon, we're obviously draining.

Ranboo takes a deep breath.

"Dream," he says, looking in the man's eyes. "You're incredibly strong, and brave, even if you don't think you are."

"I..." Dream takes a shaky breath. "Am I?"

"You *are*." Ranboo glances up at a sudden new noise. Fighting. Outside. He can see a door, and he can see a ray of light fly by the other side. The outside world. He can do this.

No.

They can do this.

He can hear the King chasing him down, and he remembers his parents. Sister Anne. Tommy. Tubbo. Techno. Wilbur. *Phil*.

Ranboo grabs onto the energy that pulls on his soul with all of his might. Holds on tight to Dream and aims for the doors. He aims, he fires, *snap, vwoop*.

Forcing himself through the doors, he sees that Phil has his wings spread out again, fighting off a dreamon that had gotten too close. Techno is by his side, covered in dreamon blood, wielding the axe from before with might and bloodlust.

“Phil!” Ranboo cries out as loud as he can. He pulls Dream as hard as he can, who was still by his side, and snap- *vwoop* he’s teleported a little closer.

Phil jolts when he hears his name get called, and seeing Ranboo (*and* Dream) seems to give him a little more fervor. It helps, too, that the dreamons that they’re fighting stop and retreat back to the school, back to their King.

“Ranboo!” Phil shouts. He drops his sword, which dissolves instantly, and *sprints* to him. “Ranboo, thank the gods that you’re still okay. And you-- you got Dream, too.”

“I do, I do.” Ranboo nods.

“That was incredibly stupid--”

“I know, I’m sorry.”

It was stupid, it was reckless. It was dumb, to try and do that when he had very little confidence in his magic, because he’d never teleported with someone else before.

But he would do it again. Ranboo would do it ten times over, twenty times over, because even though it was a dumb idea, he saw his parents. He saw his mom. He talked to her. She hugged him. They didn’t abandon him on purpose. He keeps those memories close. He doesn’t want to forget them yet.

“We can have an emotional reunion later.” Techno interrupts. His voice is flat, but he’s standing right behind Ranboo now, between his back and the ruined school. “You three get out of here. I think there’s something I need to see.”

“Tech--”

“I can do this.” Techno turns back to face Phil. “Technoblade never dies.” He hoists up the axe over his shoulder, picks up a shield that had been abandoned, and runs into the school.

Ranboo wants to shout for him, like Phil is, but he’s tired. He’s very, very tired, and starting to crash. His eyes flutter shut.

And they don’t open for a while.

Chapter End Notes

THIS IS THE LONGEST CHAPTER I HAVE EVER WRITTEN, OH MY GOD.CHAPTER FIFTEEN WAS 5.6K WORDS, THIS IS 5.7K OH MY GOD.

I CAN and will safely say that any other fic I work on after this will either have shorter chapters or less chapters, because these chapters average out to about 3k words and that is so much, why did I do this to myself.

So. How are y'all doing? A lot sure happened. Hey, it's the last angst of the story, I gotta have it go out with a BANG, if you know what I mean. Nobody died, but sometimes you gotta pour salt in some old wounds :)

There's so much to talk about here. The weird nightmare scene is probably the worst part of angst I've ever written, and I'm incredibly happy with how it turned out. I like the bit after it, too, where Ranboo actually meets his parents.

How does this happen? It's his mother's gift. What is his mother's gift? I'll leave that for you, my readers, to theorize and decide. It's like Magic Jesus. Sometimes, it's fun to have a few things left to the readers.

I'm just so, so happy with this chapter. It's been in the works for months. MONTHS! And here we are. Promised Land is... over.

Well, we still have chapter 30, we still have an epilogue. But it's got a time skip and it's a little short compared to everything, but it ties up the story sweetly.

But this chapter? I think this chapter was the most emotional I've ever been writing a chapter. I went through the writing equivalent of the epic highs and lows of high school football (sorry about that Riverdale reference) during the process of this chapter. It pushed me through the epilogue, and I can now say that Promised Land is done.

Not DONE done, as I've finished it I'm realizing there are a few little missing plot bits I need to tie up, and I'm planning a probably four-to-five chapter short "sequel" that covers those. Written more as a collection of oneshots than an actual arc. But I hope you stick around for that too >:D

Thank you all so much for reading, as usual. I'll see you in the epilogue tomorrow ;D

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EPILOGUE

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

54 DAYS LATER...

Ranboo never thought he'd be a fan of parties, but having the entire community over for a winter holiday party was very nice.

Winter holiday, because Ranboo knows that there's more holidays in December than just Christmas, his religion doesn't rule the world, and it's fun to see the mixture of cultures. Though it's probably done in an incredibly brazen, hopefully not too-offensive way.

There's fresh challah bread mixed in with casseroles and baked honey ham and quite the impressive collection of yule logs. Chocolate and vanilla and strawberry, Ranboo knows that he's most definitely going to not eat anything for another few days, but it's worth every moment of it.

It was Christmas eve. The pine tree that Tubbo had carried down from the mountains (having someone who could pick up a car and not break a sweat came in very handy, especially because he just wanted to be paid in food and not anything else) was decorated with mostly handmade ornaments and decorations.

Both Tommy and Wilbur had made clay ornaments during their first Christmas with Phil. Techno apparently had a clay ornament somewhere, but he didn't want to bring it out (out of embarrassment, probably), and there was a new one decorating the tree.

Ranboo isn't good at art, but compared to the others, it looks better. It helps that he was older than when the other two were adopted by Phil, at least.

But the whole community being over was nice, if a little crowded.

"Ranboo, the green bean casserole is delicious!" Someone says, and it takes a crane of the neck to recognise it as Puffy, the lady whose cabin was most definitely still in one piece after the events of Halloween night.

Totally. He hopes that fixing up the kitchen went well, but it was fun to see Sapnap try and put out a fire when he, himself, is a human torch. And Quackity running to help and accidentally copying Sapnap's magic in the process and making even more fire?

Ah, he's so glad he remembered to write that in his journal, he would never want to forget that.

"Thank you." He replies. It was Phil's recipe that he followed as closely as he could, hearing that other people were enjoying it made his heart soar.

"No problem, kiddo!" She smiles. "I gotta go let Foolish know it exists before it disappears."

Right. Names and faces were hard to keep track of when you have memory problems and prosopagnosia, but he's trying his best. It helps that Puffy has incredibly curly hair that makes her silhouette stand out from everyone else.

He ducks through the kitchen to grab a glass of water, and almost runs into a conversation.

"Hey, Ranboo!" Dream greets him.

It's not too strange to see Dream again, but he definitely looks the nicest today than he has since... Well, the whole of November, when he was crashing in Techno's room in order to heal from his serious injuries from the King.

"H-hey!" It's weird, so many people know his name, but he has a hard time recognizing him.

Dream is hanging out with George and Sapnap (and he *finally* remembers George's name, because Gogy is a weird nickname based off the weird sunglasses he wears everywhere because of his magic), and they're just chatting in the corner.

"Dream, c'mon, can you please show us again!"

"Sapnap, you've known for, like, a month, and you've asked about it every single day since I've seen you." Dream turns back to the conversation and sighs, before pulling out a small bomb from nowhere. He hides them back when Sapnap tries to swipe it.

"The last thing we need right now is an explosion in Phil's house," George comments dryly. As the trio break into laughter, Ranboo takes it as his shot to duck away and head back to the living room, where the most intense Mario Kart tournament is going on.

Even Techno is involved.

As he makes his way back into the hallway, he hears a small gasp, and something runs into him. Not his chest, really, more like his legs, and they wrap around him.

"Ranboo!"

It's an unfamiliar voice. He glances down to see a little kid, with bright red hair. He... knows this kid.

He *knows* this kid.

He knows this kid because this kid is from *the* orphanage.

"C-Charlie...?"

It's weird to see her again. Her red hair is cut short-- much shorter than Ranboo's, which has grown enough to start getting in his face-- and she's in a little red button-up shirt and black pants with a pair of suspenders. She looks adorable.

But how...?

SHe must have been adopted by someone in the community, then, right? It makes sense. He feels the magic waft off her and it's the same feeling of home that he got when she gave him that last hug.

"No, not that name!" It's weird because she never talked, but that is *definitely* Charlie. Or. Wait.

"I'm sorry, what?"

"I don't go by Charlie anymore 'cause I'm not a girl!"

Oh! Oh, okay.

"Well, what *do* you go by, then?"

"I'm Michael!" The little kid smiles. "Mom helped me pick it out!"

"I like it a lot, Michael." Ranboo returns the smile and the energy. Michael's probably ten by now, and whatever shyness, whatever reserving nature that he had back at the orphanage is gone now.

Both of them are in better places. And that couldn't make Ranboo feel any warmer.

He glances out the window as he leads Michael to the living room, where most of the kids and younger adults were, watching the Mario Kart tournament.

It's raining. It's not cold enough for snow, yet, but there's a decent slush growing on the ground. Maybe tomorrow they'll have enough to call it a white Christmas.

But looking out the window, Ranboo decides, he's not afraid of the rain anymore.

Chapter End Notes

Look, I know it's so short, but 29 was 5.7k words, please, spare me.... Plus, there's gonna be a short little one-shot collection/five-chapter sequel after this to wrap up other loose ends I forgot! So!

Ah, the beauty of internet fanfiction. You don't have to adhere to standard rules of publishing, you can just write a story and then go "hm it needs more" and add it to a series. Yeah you can technically do that irl but there's less pressure to make it an actual plot-book in fanfic, at least.

But, that's. That's it.

Promised Land is done. It's completed. 104,218 words, 264 pages in my google doc.
Promised Land is done.

I did it! I actually finished a fanfic for once! POG!

I couldn't have done it without y'all, though. Constant comments, hearing about it on tiktok, seeing people recommend it on twitter when I search up my name because I'm bored and wanna see what people are saying about me indirectly I mean what-- you guys have really been great readers. I've written for other fandoms before (and you can see some of my older works still on this account, and I have an other ao3 that I don't use anymore) and none of them have ever been this, like, supportive? Like, I would get comments about stuff, but then they would become "when is this updating" "update pls update pls" and I would lose motivation.

But I didn't feel this pressure with Promised Land. So thanks, for that. I wrote something I'm proud of again, for the first time in years. And I've inspired people, too, to get back into reading and writing too, and that's the coolest thing in the world.

If you guys want to, I'm hosting a Q&A on Twitter tomorrow at 12pm EST for Promised Land! I'll just answer questions as they come into my replies, I'll talk about anything (except spoilers for the oneshots I got planned teehee :3c), my writing process, why I did certain things. If you have any burning questions, be ready!

Alright, okay. I need to stop now, this note is getting long. I'll see you guys... elsewhere, I guess.

Love,
Cosmo

[twitter](#)
[tumblr](#)

Works inspired by this one

[This could be Home](#) by [anxious Bean \(chicola\)](#)

[You need Level 26 for my Tragic Backstory™](#) by [DaFlangstLairde](#)

[This World Was Built on Equal Exchange but it Won't End With It](#) by [orphan_account](#)

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